

The Peripheral State?

A study of the Implementation of Statebuilding in South Sudan's Peripheries

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Master's Thesis in Political Science
Department of Social Sciences
UNIVERSITY OF OSLO

Spring 2015

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in South Sudan's Peripheries*

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<http://www.duo.uio.no/>

Word count: 25 745

Print: Reprosentralen, University of Oslo

Abstract

War-stricken and only a few years in existence, South Sudan is arguably one of the largest statebuilding-projects undertaken to date. The importance of local ownership in peacebuilding and statebuilding has been recognised for many years, but more often than not the term local ownership is used about national ownership. The areas outside the centre, the peripheries, receive only limited attention. Through a case study of Yei River County this thesis aims at assessing the implementation of statebuilding in the peripheries of South Sudan.

To provide input to the analysis a great number of local chiefs, government officials and community members across the county have been interviewed. The findings presented in this thesis have been correlated with known literature on the subject and indicate that the state is failing in providing infrastructure, services, security and justice to its population, particularly in the peripheral areas of the county. Moreover, the accountability and knowledge of the system of local governance, both in the communities and among the players, appears limited. Based on the findings from Yei River County, this thesis argues that the implementation of statebuilding has not been successful in the peripheries of South Sudan. For this to change South Sudan needs a strong focus on the lower levels of governance.

Acknowledgements

This project would not have been possible without great help from a large number of people both here in Norway and in South Sudan. First and foremost, I wish to thank my supervisor Øystein H. Rolandsen, whose extensive knowledge, voluminous bookshelves and helpful comments have proven extremely useful throughout this process.

I also wish to express heartfelt thanks to all my informants and friends in South Sudan for sharing their information, unique perspectives and time, making my fieldwork not only interesting, but also enjoyable. In particular, Dr. Jamus Joseph and Peter Hakim Justin deserve special thanks for giving me access to their networks when I had none of my own, and being someone to spar with on several issues throughout my stay. I also wish to thank the good people in Norwegian People's Aid in Oslo, Juba and Yei for making my fieldwork something more than an unrealistic dream, and the University of Oslo and UNIFOR for financial support.

Finally, I wish to thank my friends and family for putting up with my endless monologues on statebuilding in South Sudan throughout the year, and supporting me when I had doubts about ever finishing this thesis. In particular, my brother Torbjørn deserves thanks for proofreading again and again as I made my revisions. Despite all the assistance I have received, I am afraid that some errors may have survived and made it to this final product. These and the contents of the thesis are my responsibility.

Ingrid Rostad

Oslo, 19th June 2015

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1 Introduction: Yei River County, South Sudan in a historical and political context

The importance of local ownership in developmental projects in general, and peacebuilding and statebuilding in particular has been recognised for many years. However, looking more deeply into the concept of local ownership I have come to realise that it more often than not is used about national ownership, with only limited focus on the areas outside the centre and the lower levels of government. Most statebuilding projects and research efforts are focused at the national level and primarily in the centre of the country. This disregard of local ownership creates great challenges in statebuilding efforts as one of the key features of a functioning state is the ability to control the peripheries.

South Sudan is the world's youngest state, and has been subject to numerous statebuilding initiatives since before the 2011 independence. This makes South Sudan a very suitable frame for investigating how successful the implementation of statebuilding has been in the peripheries of a post-conflict country. Seeking to find an answer to this question, I performed a qualitative case study of Yei River County, an area that has experienced relative peace for almost twenty years and consequently should be better suited for a successful implementation of statebuilding.

This introductory Chapter 1 will place this case study of Yei River County in a historical and political context. Following this, the theoretical framework will be reviewed in Chapter 2, where key concepts such as statebuilding, peacebuilding and local ownership is defined and their relation to each other and to the case is discussed. In Chapter 3, I will focus on research design and methodology. There, I will present the methodological choices I have made, and the consequences of my choices on the reliability and validity of the thesis. I will also deal with challenges related to generalisation and reliability of a qualitative case study. This includes a longer discussion of the challenges of choosing to perform a fieldwork in a developing country and having to conduct most of the interviews with the use of an interpreter.

Having established the background and framework for the study, I will present my findings and analysis in Chapter 4. I compare my findings to secondary literature, and discuss them in relation to the theoretical framework. In chapter 5, I will conclude on the consequences of my findings indicating that the implementation of statebuilding has not been successful in Yei River County, making the South Sudanese state a peripheral state in the peripheries. Lastly, I will recommend further research to learn more about statebuilding in South Sudan's peripheries more widely, as well as the relationship between statebuilding and renewed conflict.

1.1 The long and winding road to independence for South Sudan

A number of historical and political events has affected the local-level power structures in South Sudan, and Yei River County is not an exception. Events at the national level and, more locally, to the Equatoria region and Yei River County itself, have had an impact on the current situation. With knowledge of these events, it is possible to analyse the implementation of statebuilding.

Following a referendum held in January 2011 on secession from Sudan, the Republic of South Sudan was established on 9th of July the same year. From Sudan becoming independent in 1956 to the independence of South Sudan in 2011, the region suffered two devastating civil wars causing immense human suffering, displacement of people and deaths. There exist no reliable figures to describe the cost of the civil wars and estimates vary greatly, with demographic data coming out of Sudan considered unreliable by many (Johnson 2003, 143).

Similar to many other areas on the African continent (Chabal and Daloz 1999, 12), the British colonial rulers in South Sudan practiced indirect rule through local chiefs. However, the British did not find the same established system of traditional authorities such as chiefs, sultans or kings in the South as in the North, with the notable exception of the Shilluk and Azande kingdoms. The British were determined to practise what was termed native rule and decided to create these authorities (Johnson 2003, 12–13; Bakheit 1974, 27–28), appointing chiefs, often among ethnic groups that had no tradition for this form of rule. The chiefs not only acted as mediators between the colonial rulers and the people, but were also judges and tax collectors (Johnson 2003, 11–13; Leonardi 2013, 89–101; Leonardi 2007, 539–540;

Rolandsen 2005, 64–70). It is recognised that this system originated in the colonial era, but it was continued after Sudan's independence in 1956 as a low-cost method of controlling areas remote of the state in the north (Leonardi 2007, 537–540; Leonardi 2013, 137–142).

Fearful of Northern dominance upon independence, the Southerners voiced violent protests prior to the 1956 independence of Sudan. In early 1962 the first opposition party in exile, the Sudan African Closed Districts National Union (SACDNU) was formed, and subsequently changed its name to Sudan African National Union (SANU) (Rolandsen 2011b, 215). The summer of 1963 saw the forming of Anya-Nya, the military wing of SANU. A series of minor operations executed by Anya-Nya in the period between September 1963 and January 1964 mark the beginning of the first Sudanese civil war (Rolandsen 2011b, 211–222), which did not end until the Addis Ababa agreement of 1972. The following relative peace lasted only eleven years, with the Second Civil war breaking out in 1983. Not all the actors in the South accepted the peace-agreement, and the conflict with the North was re-kindled in 1982. The guerrillas and southern officers joined forces, and by 1983, more and more police and soldiers had defected for the bush. By the end of 1983 the People's Liberation Movement/Army (SPLM/A) was formed (Johnson 2003, 39–63).

Following a series of internal controversy in SPLM/A throughout 1991-92, several senior commanders left the party. They formed the Nasir-fraction, a splinter group led by Riek Machar and Lam Akol, that competed with SPLM/A for support from the people and foreign assistance. As a reaction to this, SPLM announced in the spring of 1993 that it would hold a National Convention. The leadership of SPLM/A, however, claimed that the decision to hold the convention was made before the split. With the Nasir-fraction, the political controversy soon turned into a bloody war. The announcement of the National Convention may be seen as an attempt by the SPLM/A leadership to demonstrate its legitimacy and as a means to appear convincing to both South Sudanese and foreigners. Between the announcement of the National Convention and the actual date of the convention, the answer to what it was supposed to be changed many times. In the end the National Convention marked a political renewal through the announcement of a political programme and the intention of forming civilian institutions in the areas controlled by the SPLM/A (Rolandsen 2005, 35–40).

In the aftermath of the National Convention, attempts were made to expand and reform the system of local government in SPLM/A controlled areas, resulting in a separation of the civil administration from the military. However, the extent to which this was successful varied

greatly (Rolandsen 2005, 158–159). The limited success might be a consequence of the process leading up to the convention and the shifts in objective of the convention. In addition to this, SPLM/A adopted the British strategy of using local chiefs and tribal leaders to collect taxes, maintain law and order, and serve as mediators between the population and the leaders, as well as to mobilise forces to the army (Leonardi 2007, 543; Johnson 2003, 148–150).

The National Convention Resolutions from 1994 presented a general outline of the political and administrative systems at the lower levels, stating that the system at the national level should be replicated at the regional and local level (Rolandsen 2005, 158–159). In line with the resolutions, SPLM/A recognised the authority of “traditional” authorities in the shape of chiefs (Leonardi 2013, 181), but these government institutions were lacking in their capacity to perform state functions (Walraet 2013, 183–184). According to a consultancy report by Rohn, Adwok Nyaba, and Benjamin (1997) no proper legislation was set forth on local government and public administration. This left the local commissioners to organise and run their own counties, with the inevitable differences in practice. The lack of a uniform practice, together with the fact that both the regional and local level leaders were appointed by the central level, left the local and regional levels with little ability to check the power of the central level (Rolandsen 2005, 159). Such a lack of ability to check the power of higher levels of government is in conflict with the principles of bottom-up democratic control that will be discussed later on in this chapter.

After years of negotiations, the Second Civil War ended 9th of January 2005 with the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) (Holt and Daly 2011, 163–166). Before the CPA, the Machakos protocol of 2002 had laid an important foundation (Rolandsen 2011a), specifying a six year Interim Period where each side was to withdraw its forces from the other’s territory and instead form a joined armed unit. It is worth noting that a six month «pre-interim period» was stipulated, making the day of independence for South Sudan in July 2011 and not January. During the Interim Period, a new Government of Southern Sudan, commonly abbreviated to GoSS, was established as a semi-autonomous government. Power sharing at the centre, the national level, was an important part of the CPA and a new Government of National Unity was established to achieve this. General Omar al-Bashir and his National Congress Party kept the position as president of Sudan, while John Garang as leader of SPLM/A was appointed First Vice President. This made the power sharing in reality a power

sharing between the National Congress Party and the SPLM/A, leaving little room for non-aligned southerners and the opposition in the north (Holt and Daly 2011, 163–164).

John Garang was a strong advocate of the SPLM/A rhetoric for the New Sudan, a united Sudan revolutionised according to the goals of SPLM/A (Johnson 2003, 62–65; Holt and Daly 2011, 152–153) and remained so even after the change in the political discussions to a more secessionist rhetoric after the National Convention (Rolandsen 2005, 143–149). By the time the Machakos negotiations were initiated in 2002, the SPLM/A leadership had much of their legitimacy based on their somewhat reluctant pursuit of self-determination for the South. (Rolandsen 2011a, 555–556). Garang was killed in a helicopter crash on 30th of July 2005, only three weeks after assuming office in Khartoum, and was succeeded by the current president of South Sudan, Salva Kiir, widely perceived as more positive to southern succession (Holt and Daly 2011, 164–165).

During the Interim Period, and in some areas even before that, the GoSS started the process of establishing or developing state institutions to govern the autonomous region (de Vries 2013, 153–155). In some of stable areas controlled by SPLM/A during the Second Civil War, such as the Yei region, the “guerrilla government” of SPLM/A reigned for years before the CPA was signed (Rolandsen 2005, 161–163; de Vries 2013, 154–155). In garrison towns such as Juba, which had been under the control of the Khartoum government, this was not the case. The SPLM/A and the Khartoum government institutions dated from different periods and were present in different areas of today’s South Sudan. During the Interim Period they needed to be consolidated to form new agencies under the Government of Southern Sudan, but following this process, the distribution of responsibilities between the different state institutions was unclear and caused confusion for actors within and outside the institutions (de Vries 2013, 161–162).

1.2 The Current Political Situation in South Sudan

After independence in 2011, South Sudan continued to face many of the same challenges as at the point of the signing of the CPA. The project of merging a common system for the areas that had been under different administration systems during the war, as well as the struggle to gain control had proved overwhelming to the southern government (Rolandsen 2015, 165). As a result, independent South Sudan became what de Waal (2014) describes as a kleptocracy,

i.e. a militarized, corrupt neo-patrimonial system of governance. The costs of the “political marketplace” had become so high that it hardly left any funds for public services, development or institution building. This dysfunctional system had wide-reaching consequences for the new country (de Waal 2014), and as many weak states before it (Käihkö 2012, 181), South Sudan experienced political crisis.

This political crisis should be seen in relation to South Sudan as a large beneficiary of international aid, with a large portion aimed at promoting good governance. South Sudan is one of the largest beneficiaries of Norwegian aid, ranking sixth in Norad’s annual report on Norwegian aid for 2014. 39 percent of this aid has been spent on the promotion of good governance, the majority of which has been focused on strengthening public administration and civil society (Norad 2014). A consultancy report from 2012 (Lacher 2012, 6–8) indicates that the decentralised administration and political structures created with donor support function mainly as instruments of patronage. The report indicates that the appointed leaders are prioritising accommodating political actors to stabilise their own vulnerable position. Funds that were supposed to be used to establish functioning institutions have instead been seeping into the patronage system. This is making South Sudan a natural part of the picture of the informalisation of politics painted by (Chabal and Daloz 1999, xx–xxi), where the patrimonial and infra-institutional ways of legitimising power still dominates.

Even though both the CPA and the 2010 elections were seen to bring a shift in the competition for power and resources, the governance practices of the wartime continue to be upheld especially the military. At the same time, a local political class was emerging among the displaced people, struggling for societal control and access to resources. The key actors of the regulatory authority may be found again in other positions such as state officials, community leaders, military and businessmen (Walraet 2013, 186–187). Since the monetised economy of South Sudan is largely informal (Rolandsen et al. 2015, 89), the state has limited opportunity to raise taxes on markets and transactions and the knowledge of the sector is limited. In the South Sudan-Kenyan border areas, the road to financial success is paved with the history of military power in the area. The ones who had access to the centres of power during the war are the ones who continue to have economic opportunities today (Walraet 2013, 186–187).

In the late 1990s, the unified Sudan began producing oil, which soon became the dominant source of income for the country, constituting the majority of government revenues after the

independence. Fluctuating oil-prices have had a destabilising effect on the South Sudanese economy, a situation made worse by the continued disputes between the two Sudans over borders, fees for the use of the pipelines through Sudan and the distribution of oil revenues. As a response to a dispute with Sudan over oil transportation fees, South Sudan shut down production in early 2012, and it was not resumed until the spring of 2013. The production stop had a great impact on the South Sudanese economy (Patey 2014, 225–248).

On 16 December 2013, the President of South Sudan, Salva Kiir Mayardit, announced on state television that he had stopped an attempted coup in the capital Juba. It was said that this attempted coup had been led by the former Vice-President Riek Machar and several ex-cabinet ministers and officials of the ruling SPLM. Over the next few days the commanders of the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) in Jonglei, Upper Nile and Unity states announced their support for Machar and seized control over the state capitals of Bor, Bentiu and Malakal (Johnson 2014, 300–301; Rolandsen et al. 2015, 88–93). The consequences of the civil war has been devastating, and although it is difficult to determine the scale of the impact of the war, estimates say that the victims of direct fighting together with the indirect deaths from illness and malnutrition had reached 100, 000 by the end of 2014. UN estimates claim that as many as 1, 9 million people have been displaced by the conflict (Rolandsen et al. 2015, 93).

In the wake of the armed conflict, the already weak economy of South Sudan has suffered further. The revenues from oil production constitute the pillar of the formal economy and the reduction of production of nearly 30 percent hit the South Sudanese economy hard. Combined with the unwillingness of foreign investors to invest in a conflict zone and the falling oil prices of early 2015, the reduction in production has put South Sudan in an economic crisis. Any reserves that the government might have had are long gone and there is no sign of improvement as long as the current conflict continues (Rolandsen et al. 2015, 93).

1.3 Local Government in South Sudan

In and after the CPA, legislation relating to land and local government vaguely constituted the rights of communities. In 2009, the Local Government Act of 2009 (Government 2009) was launched, defining the framework of local government in South Sudan. The specific contents of this act will be discussed further in the analysis. The Local Government Act connected the

rhetoric and recognition of traditional authority with the policies of decentralisation (Leonardi 2013, 182).

According to the system stipulated in the Local Government Act (Government 2009), the *boma* is the lowest administrative unit, the county is the top unit, the *payam* is between the two. The chiefs were given the sole executive and judicial rights at the *boma* level, the lowest administrative unit. New chiefdoms, *bomas* and *payams*, were created and these administrative units, the *bomas* in particular, became the point of service delivery with distribution of relief and aid as one of their tasks. Both the community and the leadership saw the local government as tasked with providing services such as provision of water, developmental aid, and setting up medical and educational facilities. As a result, the position of *boma* chief was upgraded because they were perceived as a resource to the community as they were the ones holding the key to the services (Leonardi 2013, 181–185).

1.4 Yei River County

Yei River County is a county in the western part of the state Central Equatoria. The town of Yei and the surrounding areas were “liberated”¹ by SPLM/A as early as spring 1997. Situated close to the borders of both Uganda and the Democratic Republic of Congo, and on the road to Juba from the border, Yei quickly became a centre for relief and military operations. Soon after the liberation the SPLM/A moved parts of its exiled administration from Nairobi, Kenya to Yei, increasing the status of the area. Furthermore, Yei was the first county to have a civilian administration and became a showcase for the new local administration system in the wake of the National Convention. Yei was a relatively secure area after 1997 (Rolandsen 2005, 160–163) and the SPLM/A built civilian institutions in an attempt to compensate for the skepticism they were facing in the area (Johnson 2003, 86–87; Rolandsen 2005, 160–163). In SPLM/A controlled areas, including Yei, there was a drive to establish liberation councils at the county, *payam* and *boma* level of local administration in 1998. Elections were held in Yei County and councils formed. Congresses were held on both the *payam* and county level, but

¹ The term “liberated” is a common term for the capture of Yei by the SPLA, it was even common among expatriates working with international NGOs in the area in 1997 (Leopold 2005, 22).

there is little data on how well they functioned on the *boma* level or if the councils at all convened (Rolandsen 2005, 161–163).

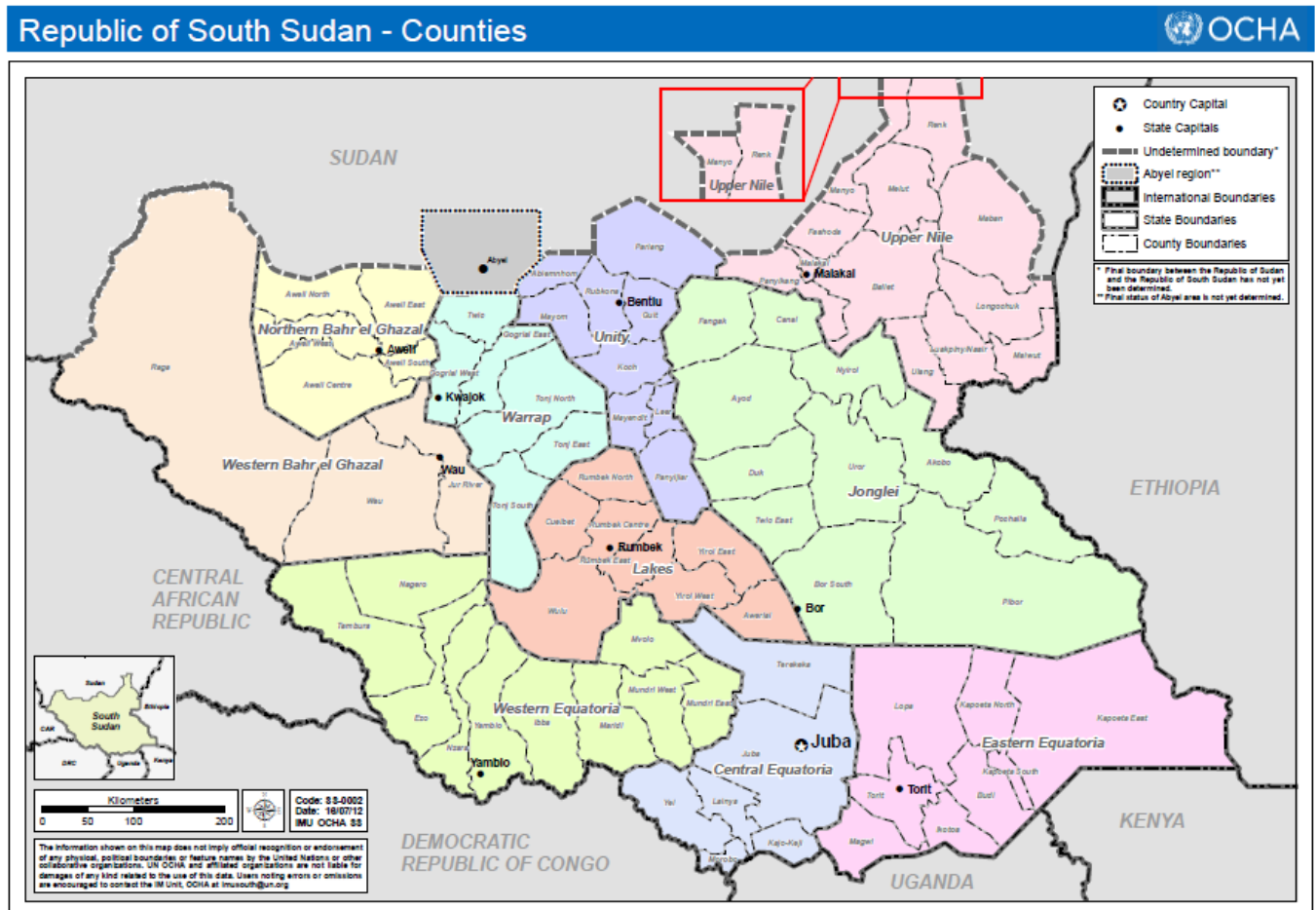


Figure 1 Map of South Sudan with Counties (UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs 2012a)

The towns near the borders, including Yei, are said to have benefitted, both historically and in present time, from their proximity to the borders through cross-border trade, access to services and through exchange (Schomerus, de Vries, and Vaughan 2013, 7–10; Walraet 2013). In a consultancy report on local structures, Rohn, Adwok Nyaba, and Benjamin (1997) suggests that Yei County has great economic potential, but that corruption linked to economic investments in the period between 1990 and 1994 delayed economic development in the area.



Since the signing of the CPA in 2005 South Sudan has experienced waves of refugees returning to their original areas, both from the North and from other, primarily neighbouring, but also western, countries. Areas not heavily affected by armed conflict experienced internally displaced people settling in them towards the end of the Second Civil War. After the Government of Southern Sudan approved the right for all southern Sudanese to resettle, these people settled more permanently in the areas to which they were displaced (Walraet 2013, 174–176). Since the Yei area has experienced relative stability, also throughout the recent conflict, this has made the area attractive for settlement.

The first people who settled in Yei after the “liberation” were soldiers and their families. The following years saw the population of the town increasing significantly due to an influx of internally displaced people (IDPs), Congolese refugees and economic migrants. This settling was presented in a working paper by Martin and Sluga (2011) commissioned by Humanitarian Policy Group at the Overseas Development Institute based on extensive field-research in Yei. Based on limited reliable demographic data from the area, they found that in 2005 there was approximately 8500 IDPs in Yei. Reports from 2006 claimed that the number had decreased to a little under 6000. However, leaders in the Dinka community informed the researcher that there was more than 7000 Dinka in Yei (Martin and Sluga 2011). Although there is only limited amounts of reliable demographic data, it is clear that the migrant population of Yei is significant. Moreover, the current civil war has added to the number of people displaced from their home areas and it is expected that this has increased the number of IDPs in Yei.

2 Theoretical framework

Peacebuilding and statebuilding and how they relate to each other is a relatively new field of research, entering the stage following the shift in how the international community view the consequences of renewed conflict (Call and Cousens 2008, 2–5; Paris and Sisk 2009a, 1–2). As a new state becoming independent following a long civil war, South Sudan is an object of both peacebuilding and statebuilding operations. This chapter aims at establishing a theoretical framework to analyse the status of local government in Yei River County, in terms of statebuilding and peacebuilding in a local perspective. First, the terms peacebuilding and statebuilding will be defined, followed by a discussion of the relationship between the two. The foundation for peacebuilding and statebuilding and what characterises a well-functioning state will then be discussed in order to establish the parameters for analysis of the status of statebuilding in Yei River County. Towards the end the importance of local ownership and a discussion of whether ownership below the national level should be an objective in international operations to promote statebuilding. Finally, the challenges faced by attempts of statebuilding and peacebuilding will be discussed.

2.1 Peacebuilding and Statebuilding and Their Relationship

Peacebuilding and statebuilding

Peacebuilding is defined by Call and Cousens (2008, 4) as “actions undertaken by international and national actors to institutionalise peace, understood as the absence of armed conflict and a modicum of participatory politics”. In the late 1990s and early 2000 we witnessed an important shift in the emphasis laid on the relationship between weak states and to which extent peace is lasting (Call and Cousens 2008, 2–5; Paris and Sisk 2009a, 1–2). According to Caplan’s (2005) definition:

“Statebuilding refers to efforts to reconstruct, or in some cases to establish for the first time, effective and autonomous structures of governance in a state or territory where no such capacity exists or where it has been seriously eroded” (Caplan 2005, 3).

As part of this shift, major actors and agencies began emphasising the construction and strengthening of legitimate government institutions in countries emerging from civil conflict. This is what is called post-conflict or post-war statebuilding (Paris and Sisk, 2009:1-2). The line marking when a country is in conflict, in war, post-war, post-conflict or peaceful is often unclear. When discussing peacebuilding it is easy to imagine a country being at war, and then after the signing of a peace-agreement, in peace. However, in real life the transition is not as clean cut. After the peace-agreement was signed in DR Congo, violent conflicts in certain areas were considered a part of a peaceful DR Congo and as such, the country was defined as post-conflict despite the presence of conflict in some areas (Autesserre 2009, 252–254). This thesis is a study of post-conflict statebuilding. After the signing of the peace-agreement in 2005, South Sudan may have been considered as postwar, but some areas were still experiencing high levels conflict. As is discussed in the historical background, the SPLA captured Yei and the surrounding areas as early as 1997 and it remained relatively stable after that. Based on this I consider Yei River District to be in a state of post-conflict and, thus, in a process of post-conflict statebuilding and peacebuilding.

Statebuilding is a specific part of peacebuilding, and is based on the view that in order to achieve security and development in a society emerging from civil war, functioning and accountable governmental institutions must be in place (Paris and Sisk 2009a, 1–2). The development of institutions and normative culture, including an effective administrative apparatus is important in this process (Lange and Rueschemeyer 2005, 20). As the analysis later on in this thesis shows, such institutions are not in place in South Sudan, providing the country with limited opportunity for achieving security and development. Statebuilding requires the coordination of a long list of actors and units, and the degree of success depends on the degree to which preexisting social institutions are integrated in the new state. These processes may often involve conflict and prolonged stalemates as the attempts by the state elites to subordinate individuals and groups may be faced with resistance (Lange and Rueschemeyer 2005, 20). Findings in this thesis indicate that reforms have been met with such resistance in Yei River District and these issues will be discussed further in the section on challenges, as well as in the analysis chapter.

When looking at the characteristics of statebuilding in South Sudan, it is important to differentiate between statebuilding and nation building. The two concepts are related, but where statebuilding focuses primarily on public institutions, nation building deals more with

the national population's collective identity (Paris and Sisk 2009a, 14–15). This distinction is worth keeping in mind as South Sudan is an infant country with a wide range of ethnic groups and tribes (Barnett and Zürcher 2009, 23–25). In this thesis, the focus will as such not be on efforts made to create or strengthen the population's national collective identity, but rather on establishing institutions. In some cases, perceptions of identity may have an impact on the statebuilding process. This is clearly an issue in Yei as many refugees and internally displaced people have resettled in this area (Walraet 2013, 174–176), causing tension between different groups in the society and pressure on public institutions. In my work, I also found that people in Yei distanced themselves culturally from the rest of the country. I will deal with this more extensively in the analysis.

Paris and Sisk (2009, 14) focus on the relationship between peacebuilding and statebuilding and define post-conflict statebuilding as “the strengthening or construction of legitimate institutions in countries that are emerging from conflict”. Peacebuilding, on the other hand, involves an effort to eliminate important causes of conflict and promote the security of the individual, societal groups and the state, and through that creating the conditions for a stable peace (Barnett and Zürcher 2009, 23–25). In Yei, and South Sudan in general, security for individuals and societal groups is a fundamental concern. My findings indicate that this has lead people not only to question the state's ability to secure safety for its citizens, but also the state actors' interest in doing so. In a peacebuilding process, the actors seek to remove the causes of violence and promote peaceful solutions through institutional change, including democratisation, in order to give voice to all segments of society and reduce the tendency towards arbitrary power (Barnett and Zürcher 2009, 23–25).

Is Building the State Also Building Peace? The Relationship Between Statebuilding and Peacebuilding

“Standing behind peacebuilding is statebuilding” (Barnett and Zürcher 2009, 26).

This statement summarises a view that is shared by several scholars (Call and Cousens 2008, 9; Barnett and Zürcher 2009, 23; Paris and Sisk 2009a, 1–3) that rebuilding or establishing functioning state institutions, at least to a minimum functioning level, is essential to successful peacebuilding. Stable peace in war-torn societies requires the creation of institutions with the capacity to handle disputes between groups through political process and non-violent means (Paris and Sisk 2009a, 1–3; Call and Cousens 2008, 9; Fukuyama 2014,

314). Although the terms statebuilding and peacebuilding are closely linked and sometimes used interchangeably, statebuilding may be seen as a tool to achieve peacebuilding (Barnett and Zürcher 2009, 23–26; Call and Cousens 2008, 4).

Despite statebuilding being a tool for peacebuilding, the process of statebuilding does not necessarily contribute to peacebuilding. For the countries going through such a process, a failure of the institutions in achieving this may potentially contribute to renewed conflict (Call and Cousens 2008, 4; Barnett and Zürcher 2009, 23–25), and so is also the case for South Sudan. While the record of the international community's success in stabilising conflict and post-conflict areas have been mixed, (Fukuyama 2014, 314–316) argues that the record is disappointing when it comes to statebuilding. As an example, Afghanistan is considered not to have a functional, legitimate central state, and while Iraq has experienced a collapse of its authority in the areas north of the capital in 2014. Neither Haiti nor Somalia has seen a functional government following the foreign involvement.

As discussed above, I see statebuilding as an approach to peacebuilding, based on the recognition that security and development in post conflict countries partly depends on the existence of capable, autonomous and legitimate government institutions. Weak governance, on the other hand, is recognised as a contributing factor to a wide range of social ills, from poverty and famine to disease. Strengthening the institutions is not in itself sufficient to produce peace and prosperity, but it will reduce the risk of falling into the mutually reinforcing traps of violence and underdevelopment (Paris and Sisk 2009a, 3). As is mentioned in the background chapter, South Sudan is currently in a situation where violence and underdevelopment prevails. Hence, I argue that statebuilding is an important part of peacebuilding in South Sudan, as well as failed statebuilding playing a part in the underdevelopment of the country.

2.2 The Foundation and the State That is Being Built

As mentioned earlier, the British, in an uneven condominium with the Egyptians, ruled South Sudan as a colony until Sudan's independence in 1956. Before the British, Yei River County, was also under Belgian and French rule (Johnson 2003, 9–21). Colonial rule has without doubt left a challenging legacy. The colonial state is viewed by some (Barnett and Zürcher 2009, 27) to have had a profound impact on the so-called Third World state that South Sudan

is an example of. The colonial state was a creation of foreign forces and much of the internal apparatus, the political system and political economy, was designed to protect the interests of foreign actors and those local elites that were under their protection. In South Sudan this colonial state left behind an apparatus of traditional authority created by the British (Johnson 2003, 12–13; Bakheit 1974, 27–28) that is still part of the system of local governance. The role of these traditional authorities in the system of local governance will be discussed at length in the analysis below (pp. 35-47).

Post-war societies such as South Sudan are identified, obviously, by the presence of armed conflict in recent history. These societies may experience periodic flashes of violence and presence of a continuing climate of fear. Post-conflict statebuilding may be distinguished from other types of statebuilding by being faced with both threats to security and legitimacy. The combination of a history of violence and a presence of fear in the society has resulted in both individuals and groups having less trust in the state's ability to guarantee security (Barnett and Zürcher 2009, 28). In a war-torn society like South Sudan, the citizens may fear violent reprisals or fall victim of partial police forces or officials of the judiciary. In some areas the population is vulnerable because there is no police force present and crime prevails (Caplan 2005, 45). In a consultancy report, Harragin (2011) writes that the civilians in Jonglei, South Sudan, experienced better protection during the war than before and after. The lack of security forces in some of the areas within Yei River County, that some of the informants in this study pointed to, increases the vulnerability of the population and decreases their trust in the state.

2.3 The State at the End of the Road

According to Giddens (1993, 309) the modern state

“exists when there is a political apparatus (governmental institutions, such as a court, parliament or congress, plus civil service officials) ruling over a given territory, whose authority is backed by a legal system and the capacity to use force to implement its policies”.

Most definitions of core state functions include the provision of security, the rule of law, including effective police and justice system, and at least a basic ability to develop and implement budget plans and to collect revenues through taxes (Giddens 1993, 309; Paris and

Sisk 2009a, 14–15). The collection of taxes in a post-conflict society may be problematic as the state's fight for the right to tax may be harder as other actors have become accustomed to the income from illicit tax collection during the conflict. During war, non-state actors may utilise the void left by the state to tax the population and in other ways benefit from economic activity, and when the year is over they are hesitant to give this up. Attempts to centralise the tax collection may be undermined, as was the case in the Democratic Republic of Congo in the late ninety nineties (Koning 2012, 234). During the long Second Civil War, South Sudan's borderlands, particularly in the South, experienced growing economic activity, resulting in new elites taking their piece of the cake in the taxation (Walraet 2013).

The best way to achieve long- term development is, according to (Evans 2005, 27–30), to combine responsiveness to market signals and bureaucratic control with bottom-up democratic control. Responsiveness to market signals means that the allocation of resources is efficient and based on an assessment of costs and benefits, making sure that the goals are consistent with the available means. This has not been the case for South Sudan, something that has contributed greatly to the difficult financial situation the country is currently in (de Waal 2014). Bureaucratic structures may create a potential for making the exercise of power more predictable, an important feature of the modern state (Evans 2005, 26–30), but this has not happened to any extent in South Sudan (de Waal 2014). Such structures also contribute greatly to orienting public institutions toward common societal goals rather than the interests of the individual (Evans 2005, 26–30). There are numerous examples of other factors than qualifications, such as kinship or economic ties deciding who will receive a given position. Chabal and Daloz (1999, 6) claim that there is no independent civil service in Africa,² which contrasts with the bureaucratic structures discussed earlier. Both Johnson and de Waal claim that this is also the case for South Sudan (de Waal 2014; Johnson 2014).

Part of these bureaucratic structures is that government employees receive salary-based compensation and are employed full-time. This makes state agents dependent on their positions to secure their livelihood, and as such limits their motivation for defiance (Lange and Rueschemeyer 2005, 8). However, Chabal and Daloz (1999, 5–8) argue that such a bureaucracy is not possible in uninstitutionalised states in Africa, where appointment and advancement is not based on meritocracy. According to de Waal's (2014) description of what

² When the term "Africa" is used in this context it refers to Sub-Saharan Africa (Chabal and Daloz 1999).

he termed the kleptocratic state of South Sudan upon independence places South Sudan in this category.

The collection of revenue on behalf of the state is an important function of the bureaucratic institutions. Moore (1998, 94–96) makes a distinction between what he terms earned and unearned income for the state. The degree to which the state's income is earned is decided by how much organisational effort is put into the collection of income, as well as the level of reciprocity for the citizens. Together the income-collection performed by the bureaucratic organisation for the state and the system of reciprocity contributes to strengthening the relationship between state and society (Moore 1998, 94). When the state acquires its revenues largely from external sources rather than by earning income, it weakens the population's position to both monitor and hold the state accountable. Strong dependence on unearned income, e.g. in the shape of foreign aid, weakens the incentive to establish an effective bureaucracy, which is an important trait of the modern state. As the citizens neither contribute, nor receives services in return, this also weakens accountability (Moore 1998, 105–106). Consequently, the state-society relationship as a whole may suffer when service delivery occurs outside the state channels (Call and Cousens 2008, 10–11; Moore 1998, 96–110). As discussed in the background chapter, South Sudan is a large beneficiary of aid (Norad 2014) and in addition it is heavily dependent on revenues from the oil industry (Rolandsen et al. 2015, 93). My findings showing that tax-collection is challenging on the local level reinforces the position of South Sudan as being highly dependent on unearned income, making it expected that the state society relations suffer as a result.

In a war-torn society, the economic dimension is only part of the picture. Provision of security is essential. Policing is crucial, but only part of the provision of security and order. It is also of very important that an independent judiciary and penal system is established (Caplan 2005, 46) because a failing justice system may contribute to new or renewed conflict (Call and Cousens 2008, 9–10). For South Sudan providing security for the citizens was a particular issue during the civil war (Rolandsen 2005, 191–193) and after the recent crisis (Johnson 2014). If the goal of democratisation is to ensure that the state's actions reflect the shared interests of the population, Evans (2005, 27–28) claims that there is no way of escaping bottom-up democratic control by ordinary citizens. When there exists a credible arena where individuals and societal groups may express their preferences and resolve conflicts, the incentives to use violence is weakened (Call and Cousens 2008, 9–10). However, this bottom-

up democratic control is considered a fragile way of controlling the state compared to the market and bureaucracy (Evans 2005, 27–28), and the challenges associated with such liberalisation will be discussed below in the section on challenges (p.21).

2.4 The Importance of Local Ownership

“Without understanding something about how state-society relations have evolved, how war may have changed things or who has power and how power works, any generic peacebuilding strategy is likely to be a poor fit. In particular, traditional sources of authority and governance must be well understood- both their assets and liabilities.” (Call and Cousens 2008, 14).

Over the last years, there has been an added focus on decentralisation, i.e. the transfer of political authority to local governments with the expectation that this will generate good governance (Harriss, Stokke, and Törnquist 2013, 3). Following this, statebuilding is not limited to top-down approaches focusing on national elites (Paris and Sisk 2009a, 14–15) and the need for bottom-up democratic control may be seen in correspondence with the general literature on the necessity of local support for reforms (Sending 2009, 4). In multiple works, the failing to understand local factors and respect local ownership by foreign personnel involved in peacebuilding and a lack of local ownership in general, are identified as important factors in failed efforts of peacebuilding (Chandler 2006; Suhrke 2007; Richmond 2007; Paris and Sisk 2009b; Sending 2009). The failure to see beyond the formal structures, and neglecting the more context-specific informal ones that Käihkö (2012, 183) identifies should also be taken into account. In order to understand the informal structures that have an impact on the process of statebuilding in South Sudan, we need local knowledge about the country.

As discussed in the beginning of this chapter, removing important causes of violence in a society is an essential part of peacebuilding. In order to do so, understanding the core conditions that cause and sustain violence is crucial, and this understanding is reliant on local knowledge (Autesserre 2014, 70). Though knowledge of the local is important, many of the people working with peacebuilding lack field experience and have limited knowledge of the local (Call and Cousens 2008, 15; Autesserre 2014, 68). This is challenging particularly in rural areas because insofar as people do have field experience, it is often limited to the capital (Kappler 2013, 127–128; Autesserre 2014, 20–37, 68–89). This is a central point in this

thesis, as the case is an area outside the centre, several hours away from the capital, including rather rural areas.

Sending (2009) states that despite the importance of local ownership having been established knowledge for a long time it has not been implemented in practice. He identifies two key reasons for this situation; the triumph of the universal over the local knowledge, and the triumph of international over local authority in the struggle for legitimacy. This may be seen in connection to Autesserre's (2014) distinction between what she calls local knowledge or country expertise and thematic or technical knowledge, where thematic knowledge is higher on the knowledge hierarchy. Local knowledge is a strong familiarity with a country or an area within an country, while thematic knowledge is an in-depth understanding of particular aspects of intervention work and technical themes (Autesserre 2014, 68–70). Thematic, or universal, knowledge has the advantage of being key in organisational learning. The people holding thematic knowledge may bring to a project ideas, techniques and approaches that both research and experience have identified as useful (Autesserre 2014, 70–71).

However, Scott (1998, 19–21) makes a case against universalism as a simplification of the way we see the state by comparing the state to a forest. He describes how the industrialised German forestry had a too narrow focus on short-time profit, which resulted in the death of the forests. The account of scientific production forestry illustrates the dangers of taking apart a very complex and poorly understood set of relations and processes aiming at isolating a single element of instrumental value. As South Sudan is a diverse country with many ethnic groups and the different regions do not share a completely common history, I would argue that local knowledge is essential. This is confirmed by a multi-donor evaluation report by Bennett et al. (2010) on conflict-prevention and peacebuilding activities in South Sudan in the period 2005-2010. They found that USAID was one of the most efficient donors due to a number of their key staff members having extensive experience and knowledge of the area (Autesserre 2014, 83). The industrial German forestry's aspiration for short time profit also serve as a valuable image of the potential consequences of not having a long-term focus, a matter that will be discussed in the next section.

The call for local ownership has been a common trait of the international development aid and peacebuilding projects since the mid-1980s, and may be seen in relation to the growth of the people-centred understanding of development (Narten 2009, 252–253; Sending 2009, 4). If reforms are to be meaningful and sustainable, the commitment and ownership of not only the

government, but also an acceptance by the wider society needs to be in place (Collier and Dollar 2004, 255; Sending 2009, 4). However, relying solely on insiders for local knowledge makes the project vulnerable as there is no one unified body of local knowledge. There is a difference between the elite and non-elite perspective, and it is difficult to decide who's version of the truth we should trust when dealing with opposing actors in a conflict (Autesserre 2014, 68–73). The challenge of elite and non-elite perspectives should also be seen in relation to the difference in centre and periphery, where the perspectives of the centre may differ greatly from the perspectives of the periphery. In the South Sudan context, this means that it is necessary to go outside the capital Juba, and get the perspectives of the population in the periphery including the people who do not speak English, as is attempted in this thesis.

2.5 Challenges to Peacebuilding and Statebuilding

Barnett and Zürcher (2009, 23) argue that “states emerging from war do not have the necessary institutional framework or civic culture to absorb the potential pressures associated with political and market competition”. What they call “shock therapy, peacebuilding style”, the push for instant liberalisation, undermines the very institutions that are instrumental for a stable peace. A more long-term focus may be beneficial, especially in terms of avoiding former combatants pursuing their interests to the extent that it leads to renewed conflict (Barnett and Zürcher 2009, 23–24). Related to this point is the political power struggle within the SPLM that has thrown South Sudan into its third civil war (Rolandsen 2015; Rolandsen et al. 2015; Johnson 2014).

The power struggle within SPLM may also be seen in relation to Barnett and Zürcher (2009, 24) accusing foreign NGOs and the UN of adopting strategies that are reinforcing previously existing state-society relations, promoting weak states that are characterised by patrimonial politics and skewed development. They claim that peacebuilding only transfers the ceremonies and symbols of the liberal democratic state, without contributing to substantial change. This is partly because the actors seeking to build peace have to navigate in a complex landscape of actors, with conflicting interest (Barnett and Zürcher 2009, 24). In the case of the local governance system in South Sudan the continuation of the chieftaincies may also be seen as an example of this (see below, p. 36).

The objective of peacebuilding is stability and liberalisation, while the state elites' key goal is to maintain their power. Similarly to the state elites, the sub-national elites are concerned with retaining their position of power, through autonomy from the state and maintaining their control in the countryside. The state elites on the other hand may be suspicious of peacebuilding reforms because they fear that such reforms might give other actors the opportunity to usurp their power (Barnett and Zürcher 2009, 24). One way of handling this fear is power-sharing agreements made as part of peace-agreement, but regimes and strong men may use such agreements to strengthen their own hold on power (Käihkö 2012, 181). As discussed in the section on South Sudan's road to independence, the CPA had such a power sharing agreement between the SPLA/M and the National Congress Party of the North. This left little room for other parties to take part in the power-sharing (Holt and Daly 2011, 163–164) making this a case of the big men holding on to their power.

The elite covet the resources that are provided by the international peacebuilding actors, as they may be useful for maintaining their power. The state elites are also dependent on the support from the subnational elites and local power brokers, who often gain increased influence during civil war, to acknowledge their rule. While subnational elites also seek the resources provided by international actors to maintain their standing and autonomy, they fear peacebuilding programs that might undermine their power at the local level and strengthen state control over the periphery (Barnett and Zürcher 2009, 24). In the case of this thesis, this is relevant because the state elites are mainly based in the centre, the capital Juba, while this thesis deals with the periphery. Programs that are aiming at strengthening bottom-up democratic control moves power from the top to the bottom, and as such undermines the power of the local elites as well. When power is moved from the top to the bottom, the elites at the levels above lose power. The way reforms which shift power, such as institutional reform in the state apparatus, are met may tell us something about this relationship.

Peacebuilding is performed in order to implement a liberal peace, to deliver services and assistance that will create new institutions that may distribute or re-distribute political and economic power in a transparent and accountable way. Post-conflict elections may serve as an example of the art of equilibrium between stability and liberalisation; in order to maintain stability it would be ideal to wait several years to hold the first post-conflict elections, but it might be necessary to carry out elections earlier to meet demands of participation (Sisk 2009, 220). Still, faced with this choice, foreign NGOs and the UN will, according to Barnett and

Zürcher (2009, 31), choose stability over liberalisation, as stability is an important prerequisite for implementing liberalising reforms. State elites and sub-national elites who want to preserve their political power and protect their political and economic interests are motivated to contribute to stability rather than liberalisation. As such, foreign NGOs and the UN together with local elites create the appearance of change through pursuing their collective interest in stability and symbolic peacebuilding, while at the same time leaving the existing state-society relations largely intact (Barnett and Zürcher 2009, 25–31). The postponing of the 2015 general elections in South Sudan due to the political crisis in the country may serve as an example of this.

Much foreign aid sets unrealistic timelines for the achievement of particular developmental objectives, partly because the funds allocated for the project must be accounted for by the end of the annual cycle (Hyden 2005, 257). This is a serious challenge for peacebuilding projects, that in addition to being expected to fulfil the rigorous task of establishing lasting peace with very limited resources, are under pressure to do so in a limited time (Call and Cousens 2008, 11; Barnett and Zürcher 2009, 31–32). This anticipation of rapid development is in great contrast to the growingly recognised requirement of sustained political attention to achieve successful peacebuilding (Call and Cousens 2008, 11; Lange and Rueschemeyer 2005, 20). The findings presented in this thesis signal that little progress has been made over the ten years that have passed since the signing of the peace-agreement in 2005, indicating that a short-term time frame is fruitless in this case. This will be discussed further later on.

The element of conflict may especially be expected to be present in a post-conflict scenario (Barnett and Zürcher 2009, 30–31). Through enhancing the power of the state, statebuilding may create a perception of, or even factual, exclusion among alienated groups in the society (Call and Cousens 2008, 10). In the case of South Sudan this point should be seen in relation to the notion of “Dinka dominance”, the perception among people belonging to other ethnic groups that the Dinka are dominant in power positions in South Sudan (Johnson 2003, 51–53). The question of Dinka-dominance will be discussed further in the analysis below (p. 55).

3 Research Design and Methodology

The objective of this thesis is to gain insight into the process of statebuilding in the peripheries of South Sudan. In this chapter, I will account for the methodological choices I have made; how the sources I have used have contributed to answering the research question; and, the consequences of the choices made for reliability and validity. I will also account for some of the challenges I faced in the execution of the research, with a special focus on the fieldwork. To answer my research question I have made use of secondary literature and consultancy reports, as well as a substantial amount of data collected during my fieldwork in Yei River County. Throughout my fieldwork, I conducted altogether 42 interviews with government officials, chiefs, informants with general insight, and members of the community, 40 of which were in Yei River County and 2 in the capital Juba. I also attended a chief's court session and carried out participant observation.

3.1 Research Question

As the world's youngest state, the post-conflict statebuilding project in South Sudan has been a joint mission of an array of players. International NGOs, the UN and national players have been involved in constructing and strengthening institutions, and significant amounts of aid have been put into achieving this. Literature on statebuilding and peacebuilding emphasise the importance of local ownership and knowledge (Call and Cousens 2008; Autesserre 2014; Chandler 2006; Suhrke 2007; Richmond 2007; Paris and Sisk 2009b; Sending 2009), but this has not been practised. International researchers and foreign personnel involved in statebuilding and peacebuilding efforts are being criticised for not giving sufficient attention to the areas outside of the capital (Kappler 2013). I wish to develop further knowledge of post-conflict statebuilding in the periphery and hence, the research question of this thesis is:

How has statebuilding been implemented in South Sudan's peripheries?

The parameters for analysis will be the system of local governance, changes in this and how the reforms have been implemented and received. As a part of this, the relationship between local authorities, traditional authorities and the communities will be important. Furthermore, the ability of the state to provide services, infrastructure and guarantees of security will be assessed, as well as obstacles to these tasks.

3.2 Research Design: Case Study

In order to answer my research question I have performed a qualitative case study of Yei River County in South Sudan. According to Gerring (2007, 19), a case is «a spatially delimited phenomenon (a unit) observed at a single point in time or over some period of time». Case studies have the potential to achieve high internal validity (George and Bennett 2005, 19 – 21), meaning that the answers found are likely to be true (Lund et al. 2002, 85–86). Variables such as democracy, power, political culture and state strength are essential features of studying statebuilding, but also difficult to measure. Because of this, I chose to perform a case study because this research design made it possible to consider contextual factors. This research design also has an advantage in identifying and measuring the indicators that best represents the theoretical concept of statebuilding (George and Bennett 2005, 19 – 21). In this case, the in-depth study enabled me to gain insight in to different actors' perceptions of these matters, as well as analysing them in relation to external reports.

My case study has a weakness in terms of external validity, the extent to which the case is representative to a broader population of post-conflict statebuilding, not covered by this study. Focusing primarily on the one case; Yei River County in South Sudan, the case study suffers from problems of representativeness (Gerring 2007, 43). However, as Flyvbjerg (2001, 72) argues, a case study brings the researcher closer to real life situations and gives greater insight into the vast array of nuances in the matter studied. As my research question concerns the statebuilding process in the periphery, the local nuances are of particular importance. I also found it fruitful to draw on my own experiences from real life situations during my fieldwork, such as my own experienced difficulty of reaching the more remote *bomas*. This provided me with greater insight into the challenges the most remote communities are facing in regards to both accessing services and participating in political processes. The possibility provided by a case study to go deeper into the matter has been very useful in answering the research question (George and Bennett 2005, 20). In particular, the relationship between the communities in the area and the migrant communities would never have been properly captured without the opportunity to immerse myself in the daily life of Yei River County.

Since the case study to a large extent allowed me to check the facts, consult multiple sources and delve deeper into the specific case (Gerring 2007, 59–60), it gave me the opportunity to gain more exhaustive knowledge of the mechanisms in the area. The governance mechanisms

associated with the challenging position of the *boma* chiefs was only revealed to me when reflecting over my observations from the field. Thus I was able to identify the compound pressure felt by the *boma* chiefs, and through that identify the new variables of poverty in the community and how this affected the chief's income (George and Bennett 2005, 20) (see the analysis chapter pp. 40-42 for a discussion of these variables).

In order to mitigate the consequences of the threats to the external validity, I chose a crucial case for my study. A case is crucial when it is most or least likely to fulfil a theoretical prediction (Gerring 2007, 115–116). Yei River County is a crucial case in that the conditions for statebuilding in this area was particularly favourable compared to other areas of the country, with the exception of being a periphery. As Yei was captured by SPLM/A in 1997 and was under their rule from then on, this area has not suffered as extensively under the challenges of merging the two systems of governance as the areas ruled by the northern government. With a favourable economic situation, a higher educational level, and relative stability (Martin and Sluga 2011), Yei River County has good prospects to have successful statebuilding. If there is an area in the peripheries of South Sudan where it could be expected to find successful statebuilding, Yei River County is a likely case.

3.3 Fieldwork

“In the research of conflict, peace and development, fieldwork has become an indispensable element of data gathering” (Kappler 2013, 125).

I conducted a fieldwork in South Sudan over a period of six weeks in January and February 2015. I was particularly interested in the perspective of local stakeholders as the researched (see model 1 for definition of local actors in Yei River County), and to get closer to the researched, making fieldwork the preferable choice (Flyvbjerg 2001; Kappler 2013).

A great deal of research on peacebuilding is not based on fieldwork or only fieldwork in the capital of the country receiving aid, as the case of South Sudan and the capital Juba. This limits the access to valuable information because it makes the researcher vulnerable to bias selection in data gathering and contributes to the same voices being heard over and over again. If the researcher only talks to the international peacebuilding actors or the, often English-speaking, elite in the capital, the perspectives of the other groups, the majority of the population, is lost (Kappler 2013). We can see several examples of this being a risk in the

South Sudan context with its heavy international presence, and distance between the elites in the centre and the rest of the population. To avoid this, I spent the majority of the time in Yei River County, and the rest in the capitol Juba. Although I was based close to Yei Town, I travelled to all the *payams* in the county (Tore, Muwgo, Lasu and Otego), and met with the majority of *boma* chiefs in the *payam* centres. I also travelled to some of the *bomas* including some of the more remote ones, Ombasi, Tukuri, Mapuko, Mungo and Logamera.

In addition to my research interviews, I found participant observation and informal conversations to be very important sources of information and insights. As I was staying in a compound together with local employees in Norwegian People's Aid (NPA), and had access to a training centre with both employees and students, I had many informal conversations related to my research questions. Most days when I was not travelling out into the remote areas of the county I would eat lunch at the training centre and the conversation topics would be the current crisis and political issues. As all of the people connected to NPA were informed of the purpose of my visit, several of them also took initiative to discuss political issues with me in less formal settings. These conversations, both the ones I took active part in and the ones I was only observing provided me with an important overview of the different views on how the chiefs were appointed. At one instance, one of my informants explained to me how the hereditary chieftainships had mechanisms for electing the heir best suited for the position, providing me with a potential explanation as to why this practice was not more widely contested, as I had come to expect.

When so much of the data is collected through observation and informal conversations, the reliability, i.e. the chance of another researcher getting the same results (LeCompte and Goetz 1982, 35), may be threatened. To mitigate this I have made detailed field notes and followed up on the information from observations and informal conversations in formal interviews in order to both have it validated or invalidated, or explore the matter further. Spending a great deal of time with the local employees without any other foreigners allowed me to become more integrated in the community, and through that access more information. This provided me with greater insight into the everyday life in the area and the lives of dominant narratives (Autesserre 2014, 6).

3.4 Interviews

Interviews may reveal information that would not be available through relying solely on observation (Bryman 2004, 340) or other available sources (Willis 2006, 146). As different actors' perception of the state system on the local level was of particular interest to me, interviews were the best way to access this information. Using interviews also has the advantage of making it possible to reconstruct previous events. However, such reconstruction has certain limitations as its reliability is limited by the informants' memory and people's tendency to interpret events retrospectively. Despite this, I find such accounts of previous events useful as they reflect the respondents' perspectives on these events (Bryman 2004, 340).

For this study, I chose the semi-structured interview, basing the interviews around a list of broad questions I had identified when I prepared the fieldwork (Bryman 2004, 319–322). I started all my interviews by asking the interviewees to tell me about themselves, both to learn how they came into their position and to see how they perceive their own role in the community. I continued to ask the informants to tell me about the community, and followed up with a question about the challenges the community was facing. After this, I asked the informants about the relationship between the traditional authorities and government authorities and between the different levels of authority (see model 1). Lastly, I asked how the current “crisis”, a common term for the civil war and economic crisis, had affected the community.

As the amount of information provided by the informants varied greatly, asking follow-up questions contributed to revealing supplementary information, something that would be more challenging using a more structured approach. One example of this is my interviews with the chiefs who said they had been elected where follow-up questions revealed that they had the chieftainship in their family and ran unopposed in the election. In addition to the advantage of revealing additional information, the qualitative interview focuses on the perspective of the respondent, a trait particularly useful in this study as the perspective of the informants provided useful information. The less structured form of the interviews also gave me added insight into the priorities of the informants, such as when I asked them what the main challenges in the community were, while at the same time providing me with comparable data.

3.4.1 Selection of Informants

In order to answer the research question in the best possible way, I used *purposive sampling* of informants, as is recommended for qualitative research. In other words, I aimed at establishing a good correspondence between the research question and the sampling, interviewing people who were relevant to the research question (Bryman 2004, 333–334). As my thesis focuses on the statebuilding process at the local level in the peripheries of South Sudan, a purposive sampling meant recruiting informants from local government administration, traditional authorities and members of the community, as well as individuals with relevant information.

In a qualitative study, the practical access to respondents may have great influence on the final selection of respondents (Bryman 2004, 333–334). This was something I experienced as a foreigner doing research through fieldwork over a short period of time. In order to establish contact with relevant informants I used contacts as door-openers (Weiner 1964), particularly in the first phase but also throughout my stay. Before arriving in South Sudan, I established contact with local employees of NPA. Through these contacts, I was introduced to other people who again acted as door-openers (Weiner 1964) in Yei. Before I started the recruitment of informants, I had an idea of whom I wanted to interview, but no means of contacting them. I did not know the names of specific people, but I knew that I wanted as many chiefs as possible as well as local government employees and representatives of the communities because, as discussed in the theoretical framework, the relationship between these actors is important for successful statebuilding.

The head chiefs in the *payams* served as gatekeepers to the communities and the *boma* chiefs, having the power to block my access, because their acceptance and introduction served as an approval of my presence. The County Commissioner's office also served as a gatekeeper because I needed a research permit from them to meet with other government officials and travel to the *payams* (Willis 2006, 147). As the *payam* directors were informed of my presence and were asked to be helpful when I contacted them by the County Commissioner's office, they also served as a door-opener (Weiner 1964). In several of the *payams*, the *payam* director and the head chief cooperated to facilitate the meetings with the *boma* chiefs and other relevant informants.

In the end, I had interviewed either the *payam* director or the deputy director in all the *payams*, all the head chiefs and the majority of the *boma* chiefs. I had some interviews with elders and other forms of traditional authority, as well as members of the community, mainly youth and women. As virtually all the chiefs and government officials were middle-aged or old men, I wanted the perspectives of women and youth in the community to balance out the skewedness. Unfortunately, I was unable to get many interviews with members of the community, but I attempted to supplement with informal conversations when possible.

The choice of using high level authorities as door-openers may have affected the findings of the study as I might have been conceived as being in alliance with either the government authorities or the head chief (LeCompte and Goetz 1982, 46). However, I saw this as the only way to reach the informants, as they were unwilling to talk to me without the approval of the head chief. I believe this had an impact on the interviews where the higher authority was present, for example, when the head chief followed me to my interview and it took place outdoors. The challenge of interviews in public places is discussed further down, but I attempted to avoid representatives of the authorities being present during interviews.

In order to mitigate the threat of the informants fearing reprisals I was very careful in having my interpreter explain that I was independent from the authorities, and that the informants had the option of being anonymous. One group of women in Mugwo *payam* did not wish to provide me with their names. None of my other informants asked to be anonymous, but some of them asked to have parts of the interview anonymised. I met the wish of anonymising the parts they wished, and where it was impossible to avoid identification without changing the content too much, I did not use the data. Other than these specific sections, I did not perceive a threat to the interviewees, and as such did not find it necessary to anonymise them. It would have had a great negative effect on the internal validity of the thesis if I had anonymised the informants on a general basis, as the geographical markers that influence the responses are very important. If I was to anonymise them, I would have had to anonymise the case as well, weakening my findings greatly.

3.4.2 Collecting the Information

The setting of the interviews may influence the material gathered (Willis 2006, 148), but I had limited opportunity to control where the interviews took place and who was present. Some interviews took place in offices where it was possible to close the door, while other times I

had less control. These varied from cafés in Yei Town to under a mango tree in a remote *boma*. Sometimes this meant that a head chief was present while I talked to the *boma* chief, or that other people were close by, something leading me to treating some of the interviews as public statements rather than confidential conversations (White 2000). There is no sure way of knowing how this affected the information given. It is possible that what informants said to a greater degree reflected the accepted discourse, while leaving out statements that are more controversial. However, insight into the accepted discourse is also useful information (White 2000). To the extent possible, I still attempted to keep the conversations private through choosing a secluded area or closing the office door, so long as the informant was comfortable with it.

Another challenge in the interview setting was that many of my informants did not speak English to the extent that they felt comfortable giving the interview in English. Bujra (2006, 174) writes that English speakers often tend to be part of a particular social sphere of wealthy, educated or powerful men. In Yei River County, I found this to be true, with the addition that more youths than elders mastered English. As I do not speak Kakwa, the dominant local language of the Yei region, and my Arabic skills are limited, I found that in order to access the perspectives of the people at the local level, I needed an interpreter. Without an interpreter, I would not have been able to interview most of the chiefs, elders or members of the community that I interviewed. However, research through an interpreter as a third party may be problematic (Bujra 2006; Borchgrevink 2003), as the following discussion will show.

“The problem with dependence on local translators is that one may be restricted and trapped within their perspective on their own society” (Bujra 2006, 174). My interpreter served as a research assistant facilitating the interviews, as well as an informant in terms of explaining settings and who people were. This was very useful in both accessing informants, as well as in understanding the positions the informants held in the community (Borchgrevink 2003, 108–110). However, I did experience the issue of the interpreter being restricted by his own perspective of the society, and eagerness to explain this to me. An anecdote from an interview with a chief may serve as an illustration of this. The chief was explaining how poor the people in his area were and how difficult this was, at the same time as he was expressing frustration that he did not get any pay for his work. I had heard this from several chiefs and wanted to investigate whether he felt trapped and found it difficult to collect large sums of money from poor people in his community, even if this was part of the foundation for his pay. Therefore, I

asked my interpreter to ask him about this relationship, whereupon the interpreter continued to explain to me that there is a system of fines and that they are independent of the person's wealth. In the end, we agreed that he should ask the question and I got the answer, the chief did in fact reduce fines for poor people. After this, I had a conversation with my interpreter where we agreed that I would signal to him when I needed his explanations, otherwise he would only communicate my questions and the informants answers. In the interviews that followed, this was less of an issue.

Even if recording interviews has the advantage of heightening the reliability of the work (LeCompte and Goetz 1982, 43), I opted to not record my interviews, but rather make notes during the interviews and write out these notes every evening. This was because I did not want to risk inhibiting the informants' desire to speak freely with the presence of a recorder, and thus weakening the validity. Taking notes during the interview was challenging, but since I used an interpreter in many of my interviews, and as such were able to continue my notes while the interpreter asked the next question, this was not a major problem. I made time for writing out my notes, including observations during the interviews, every evening while they were still fresh in my mind (Willis 2006, 149–150). The few times I was unsure if I had written something down accurately, I contacted my interpreter who also made notes during the interviews to check if we had the same information. As a result, I believe that my notes are accurate. The choice of writing out the notes every day also gave me the opportunity to analyse the data continuously throughout the data collection, making it possible to adjust the course of the work when needed.

3.5 Limitations and Challenges

Throughout the fieldwork, I experienced many practical challenges, some of which I will discuss here. Even if Yei is one of the more peaceful areas of South Sudan, the issue of security is not one to be taken lightly and the security situation placed some limitations on my activities and movement. Having a good contact in the country where I did my fieldwork proved to be very useful (Binns 2006, 15) and NPA provided me with a place to stay and, most of the time, with transportation. I could only walk freely around the town centre of Yei during daytime. As a result, I had limited access to private conversations with people around town, something that might have deprived me of some perspectives. However, I was able to

meet different groups of people through other channels, and as such do not see this as a major problem.

Binns (2006, 15) emphasise the importance of timing for a successful fieldwork, and recommends basing the decision on local knowledge. I performed my fieldwork during the dry season, making the roads of the area easier to travel and making it possible to reach the remote *bomas* by vehicle. Still, the poor road quality made transport time consuming, and due to the security situation, there were restrictions on travel after dark. I also realised in the initial phase that it was challenging to make appointments in advance. To mitigate this, I hired a research assistant who made appointments on my behalf and who was also my interpreter. This was an important help, especially when making appointments to go to the *payams* far from the centre, as many of the people I needed to contact did not speak English. Several of these areas did not have phone service, and I needed local knowledge to find someone who could get a message to the village or call the one person who had a phone. This made me spend a lot of time organising before I could start the actual collection of data and forced me to settle for deputies if the *payam* director was not present. As a result, I was left with limited time in the remote areas, making me dependent on the informants being available on short notice. This limited my access to community members in the most remote areas, but I was able to talk to some in every *payam*. Fortunately, I was able to meet the chiefs in almost all the *bomas* I visited despite not having an appointment, so the challenge of travelling did not affect my research greatly.

One important challenge to this form of study is the influence the process of gathering of data will have on what is being studied, the informants might adjust their accounts regarding to what they expect that the researcher wishes to hear (Jenkins 1994, 438). For me this was a challenge, as this risk increases if the researcher is closely associated with someone that may be perceived to affect the lives of the informants. I was staying in the compound of NPA, as well as them providing me with transportation. This resulted in me being very closely associated to NPA. To limit the impact of this on my interviews I very clearly stated that I was an independent researcher, and asked my research assistant to also be clear on this (Kappler 2013). On some occasions in the early stages of my fieldwork, I experienced expectations that I could provide services because of my link with an NGO, and they focused on the need for services in the interviews. However, after I instructed my interpreter to be particularly clear on the matter, this did not happen anymore. I also experienced that after

staying in town for a while, rumour had spread that I was there for research, not to provide aid. Hence, I do not think this affected my data in any significant way.

3.6 Conclusion

Fieldwork to collect data through semi-structured interviews was the best approach for this thesis. However, researching in a developing country is not without challenges, some of which might have had an impact on my findings. I have taken measures to mitigate these challenges, and believe that the validity of the findings are acceptable. I believe that the range of informants I was able to reach, particularly informants holding positions in the local government system, is sufficient to give me an insight into the process of statebuilding in Yei River County. The in-depth knowledge gained by this case study may not have grounds for generalisation, but has value in terms of understanding the local context in a complex society.

4 Findings and analysis

What implications have the changes in local governance had since 2005? How will they affect peacebuilding, statebuilding, social and economic development, and democratisation in the area? Do the experiences from Yei River County offer nuances or correctives to existing theories on post-conflict societies, discussed in the theory chapter above? In this chapter, I will present my findings from Yei River County in 2015, and compare them with the state of statebuilding and peacebuilding in South Sudan in 2005, when the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) was signed, and four years later in 2009. In the comparison I will focus on the threats to peace and stability identified in 2005 and 2009 by Bennett et al. (2010) in their report “Aiding the peace: A Multi-donor Evaluation of Support to Conflict Prevention and Peacebuilding Activities in Southern Sudan 2005-2010”. Drawing upon additional reports and secondary literature to supplement my findings, I will use the comparison as a basis for an evaluation of progress.

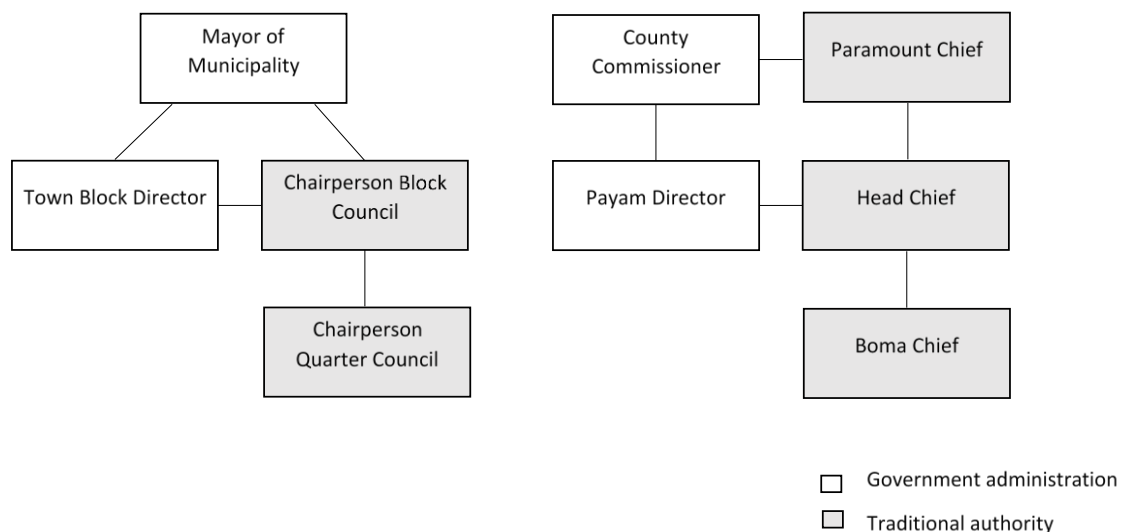
In the first section I will focus on the structures of local government in South Sudan, expanding this to the status of infrastructure and service provision, and how this affects the confidence the people have in the state in the second. The third section will explain the issue of security, both in terms of protecting the population from violence and the justice system itself. The next section will outline the challenges that the migrant population, both new and old, pose for the community and how this is affecting the system of governance. Towards the end of the chapter, I will discuss how people from Yei rhetorically differentiates between internal migrants from other parts of the country, and themselves as Equatorians. I will use the term “community” to refer to the people living in an area, whether this is a village, the town or a larger area. This is a common term used by the people in the area, and I have interpreted it as meaning a group of people sharing a kind of fellowship beyond geographical placement.

4.1 The System of Local Governance in Yei River County

When studying statebuilding in Yei River County it is important to understand the formally instated system of local governance. Local governance in South Sudan is regulated by the

Local Government Act of 2009 (Government 2009) which states that local government in South Sudan shall comprise of three tiers:

- (1) The County, City, Municipal and Town (Councils);
- (2) The *Payam* and Block Councils (Coordinative administrative Units); and
- (3) The *Boma* and Quarter Councils (Basic Administrative Units).



Model 1 Local government Yei River County

In Yei River County there are four *payams*: Lasu, Tore, Mugwo and Otego. The municipality is a construct outside the County (Government 2009), but with Yei Town as a municipality and being the centre of Yei River County it has been included in this study. A great number of the respondents based in Yei town expressed frustration and confusion as to the relationship between the county and the municipality, and pointed to the recent introduction of the municipality. One of the informants complained that the municipality “was not brought in a proper way” and that the ones affected by the changes were not consulted (Bakata Charles 2015). This may serve as an example of the argument of Collier and Dollar (2004) and Sending (2009) that sustainable reform is dependent on accept by both the government and the wider society.

The director of Yei Town Block considered the objections to establishing the municipality as a matter of simply lacking understanding and believed that it would soon settle. He explained

the conflict by saying “Those [the chiefs] in the quarter councils don’t understand the meaning of the municipality. It has only existed one year and the chiefs are used to “dealing with the county” (John Ponsiano Loro 2015). Other informants pointed to issues related to the relationship between the Municipality and the County, regarding tax collection in particular, and suggested that this was not something that would simply improve anytime soon (Richard Lugala God 2015; Fraser Joseph Lokule 2015). The restructuring of the administration within the county have apparently had an impact on how the tax revenues and other revenues from Yei town are allocated. As part of the restructuring, a separate chamber of commerce for the municipality was established, resulting in a conflict between the Municipality Chamber of Commerce and the County Chamber of Commerce. This conflict may be rooted in disgruntlement caused by the shifting of an important source of income from one set of powerful big men to another. The struggle related to who has the right to collect revenues in Yei town may be related to Koning's (2012, 234) discussion on why tax collection may be challenging in post-conflict societies. In his work he describes how several non-state actors have become accustomed to income from tax-collection, which may explain how changes in the organising of local government and the consequent shift in who benefit from taxation, may cause conflict.

The confusion and conflict related to state and non-state governance is having a negative effect on state-society relations in the area, creating a sense that some stakeholders do not respect the chain of command instituted in the Local Government Act (see model 1). Some of the chiefs are reluctant to deal with the municipality and go straight to the county commissioner with their problems (Bakata Charles 2015). The shifts in power and resource allocation and the resulting conflict, has made the municipality appear to lack sufficient support and legitimacy in the community to act as a credible government authority.

According to section 19 in the Local Government Act (Government 2009) “The administrative aspects of the Authority institutions and systems [i.e. traditional authorities] shall be incorporated in the three tiers of the Local Government.” In this lies a parallel structure for the traditional authorities, with representation at the different levels of local government. There is a paramount chief at the county level, a head chief at the *payam* and municipality level and a chief at the *boma* level. Many of my informants referred to the chief at the *boma* level as the executive chief or *boma* chief (see chart above).

Although there was a “head chief” in Yei town, there was apparently no paramount chief in Yei River County and people claimed that there in fact never had been an election for this post. Despite the fact that there was no paramount chief, I was repeatedly urged to meet with him. In the end, I followed the directions to the paramount chief’s office and made an appointment, only to realise that it was the office of the head chief of Yei. He was referred to as the head chief, despite the change in title to chairperson the establishment of the municipality had dictated. According to the clerk at the head chief’s office the head chief had taken on the role as acting paramount chief in the absence of an elected paramount chief. However, this information was not verified by other sources and was even contradicted by the office clerk at the County Commissioner’s office (Richard Lugala God 2015). The head chief in Otego also referred to himself as the paramount chief, but when I asked he explained that the term had changed (Justin Towongo James 2015). This is one of many examples of confusion related to terms, titles and roles, a matter I will deal with more extensively later on.

My informants gave inconsistent information about when an election for paramount chief was supposed to have taken place. Some claimed it should have taken place as early as 1997, just after the «liberation», or after the Local Government Act in 2009 and others yet after independence in 2011. Moreover, I got the impression that people were unsure of when the post of paramount chief was established. An office clerk at the County Commissioner’s office said that the position of paramount chief existed in the Old Sudan (i.e. before 2011 when South Sudan was a part of Sudan), but not in Yei. These irregularities exemplify some of the challenges of creating a uniform system of local governance in a country with different historical practices. It is possible that this confusion may result from the area now called Yei River County being part of the Belgian controlled Lado Enclave, and not under British control until later (Leonardi 2013, 41–51), and as a result was not subjected to the British institutionalisation of the tribal leadership. It is also worth noting that many of the informants mentioned the establishment of Yei River County as a smaller unit than the earlier, considerably larger Yei River District. This appeared to leave some people confused as to what functions belonged to which level.

The controversy surrounding the establishment of the municipality and the confusion regarding the position of paramount chief may be seen as two clear signals of the state failing to reach the lower levels. In the case of the municipality, the failure to include the actors affected by decisions in the process appears to have had a great negative impact on the

support for the change. The complaints I heard were directed at the process of implementing the change rather than the change itself, something that would support the claim that the process had a negative impact. However, it is possible that the complaints were directed at the process because it was easier to criticise a flawed process than the reform itself. Had the process been better, they might have criticised the reform itself. Still, finding that actors who are part of the system of local governance ignore the changes in the system because they are not satisfied gives reason for concern. It shows that the state has failed in strengthening and developing legitimate institutions, and through that failed in creating the conditions for creating stable peace (Barnett and Zürcher 2009, 23–25). This may also be seen as a sign that the state is lacking in capacity to mobilise support or force compliance from the lower level actors.

When discussing why there is so much confusion and unwillingness to comply with the system of local governance it is important to take into account the knowledge of the Local Government Act among the parties. It is reasonable to expect that the Local Government Act (Government 2009) exists in an Arabic version, Arabic being an official language, but I never saw a version in any other language than English. One of my informants pointed at this as challenging for implementing local governance in South Sudan (Lubari Ramba Lokolo 2015). My general impression is that there generally is not sufficient knowledge of English to understand the Local Government Act in the area, as most of my interviews with chiefs were carried out with the use of an interpreter due to their lack of proficiency in English. Furthermore, I observed that while most of the people could speak Arabic, very few knew how to read it. Therefore, even if an Arabic version of the Local Government Act existed, it would be of little help as many of the people I talked to would not be able to read it. This is a very serious threat to the accountability of the state apparatus and the bottom-up control that is strongly emphasised by Evans (2005, 27–28). When neither the actors who are part of the system of local governance, nor the population may access the information of their responsibilities, it is very challenging to check the power of the elites. It is also challenging for the players holding positions, such as the chiefs, to know what their duties are, and as such difficult to perform them.

4.1.1 The *Boma* Level- Where the Chief is not the Boss

Establishing that there shall exist traditional authority on all the local levels, the Local Government Act section 19 (Government 2009) moves on to state that the *boma* is the main domain of the traditional authority and consequently the place where traditional leaders perform their administrative and customary functions. However, my findings regarding the position of the *boma* chief show that he is heavily dependent on the *payam*, and even the county in handling issues. The acting chief of Mungo *boma* explained that when facing a problem “we sit down, we write reports to the *payam* director or the commissioner and any assistance will come through this channel.” (Samuel Aminga Mangora 2015). This approach to challenges in the community seemed to be common in all the *bomas*, with the main variation being the frequency of meetings with the director, which was again depending on how far away from the centre the *boma* was located. The function of the *boma* chiefs as channels of requests rather than individuals exercising influence upwards in the system may be seen as a feature that has survived since the British created the chieftaincies as a low cost way of controlling the people (see introduction chapter p. 2). This corresponds with Leonardi’s (2013, 190–195) description of the community and the chiefs themselves seeing the *boma* chiefs more as messengers for the government or interlocutors between the government and the rural population than a power institution.

Below the *boma* level, there are headmen and sub-chiefs that are responsible for parts of the community, a geographical area or a number of families. This responsibility implies both low-level conflict resolution, and reporting to the *boma* chief on matters of the community, such as deaths, disease or births. Apparently, the *boma* chiefs are in a squeeze between the higher levels of *payam* and county and these lower levels. The *boma* chief in Asole *boma* in Lasu *payam* said “If there are some [problems] it will be solved by the headmen, the sub-*bomas*, if it is too hard for them I will handle it. Most of the cases are being handled by the community” (John Thomas 2015). Most of the *boma* chiefs I interviewed explained that a great portion of the issues they were faced with would be handled through sending reports to either the *payam* director or the head chief. This practice leaves the *boma* chiefs with little room for action as most decisions are made over their heads. One informant explained how the creation of the *payams* had effectively transferred power away from the *boma* chiefs to the *payam* directors, while the traditional legal authority had been transferred to the head chiefs. He even went as far as to say that “the *boma* chiefs are now playing a minimal part. They don’t even have

informal power left” (Manoah Aligo 2015). This is in conflict with what Leonardi (2013, 182–186) found about the *boma* chiefs’ position being elevated in the wake of the CPA. However, as she notes, part of the cause of the elevation was the expectations of services such as health care, education and water provisions that would be channelled through the *boma*. According to many of my informants, these services had yet to materialise, something that may have led to a devaluation of the *boma* chiefs.

The transfer of power to the *payam* level from the *boma* level may indicate a centralisation of power. This may have a negative impact on the ability of all segments of the society to voice their opinion, and through that have a negative impact on the process of peacebuilding through statebuilding, as discussed in the theoretical framework (Barnett and Zürcher 2009, 23–25). This is especially interesting in view of my findings indicating that there were distinct differences between the *bomas* within the *payams* as to the challenges they were facing. In particular, the more remote *bomas* expressed a sense of isolation, and it is possible that the transfer of power to the higher level will reinforce this.

Contrary to the recommendation that state employees are full-time employed and receive salary-based compensation (Lange and Rueschemeyer 2005, 8), the *boma* chiefs receive no salary but are expected to generate their own income. Even if it is possible to argue that *boma* chiefs are not state employees as they are (supposed to be) elected by the community, my interviews show that they view themselves as government officials. This situation is made more difficult for the *boma* chiefs because cases that they are supposed to handle, which would generate income, are being handled elsewhere. The *boma* chief of Asole John Thomas (2015) explained, “there is no salaries for us because some of the cases we are supposed to solve are actually being solved by the community themselves”. In combination with the finding that the levels above the *boma* leave little scope of action for the *boma* chiefs, this leaves the *boma* chiefs in a difficult situation.

The *boma* chiefs I interviewed said that they were unable to sustain themselves through fines and tax revenues. Nearly all of them raised the issue of not having a salary, giving the impression that this was a recent change. “Before, I was having salary, but of recent it was not there. The local government told us to take any amount from court cases in our *boma* to take as our salary” the *boma* chief of Tukuri said (Simon Logoro Abui Lupe 2015). However, the *boma* chiefs are faced with the difficulty of seeing the poverty in the community at the same time as they are supposed to collect their own income from the people. The *boma* chief of

Tukuri Simon Logoro Abui Lupe (2015) explained that when he saw someone in financial difficulties he would reduce their fines. This serves as an example of the challenge of being a part of the community while also being expected to make unpopular decisions. This coincides with Leonardi's description of chiefs trying to distance themselves from situations that would put strain on their relationship with the local community of which they are also a part (Leonardi 2013, 192–194). For the *boma* chief of Tukuri I would imagine this to be even more challenging as he described himself as being alone with the responsibilities as Tukuri is located far from the centre. He continued to state “I don't know why they made the change” (Simon Logoro Abui Lupe 2015), a statement that sums up some of the challenges faced by the *boma* chiefs. They seem to be lacking insight into why decisions are being made at the higher levels and, perhaps more importantly, lacking any influence on the decisions. Based on my interviews with *boma* chiefs it appears that this tendency is clearer the farther away from the centre, both the *payam* centre and Yei Town, the *boma* is situated.

Some of the informants from remote *bomas* also listed the issue of transportation as contributing to this challenge residing in the periphery. The *boma* chief of Tukuri Simon Logoro Abui Lupe (2015) said that he could not always attend the meetings in the *payam* because transportation costs were too high. The issue of infrastructure will be dealt with more extensively in the following, but the centre-periphery aspect of this finding deserves some attention. As discussed in the theoretical framework and also by Autesserre (2014, 68–73), the difference between the centre and periphery may be seen in relation to the difference between the elite and non-elite perspective. When the representatives of the communities in the periphery are effectively excluded from the decision-making body, this may be an obstruction of the bottom-up democratic control that is important if the state is to serve the population (Evans 2005, 27–28). The lack of contact between the periphery and centre should also be seen in relation to the need for the state to have control over the periphery (Barnett and Zürcher 2009, 24), especially in a post-conflict-situation.

4.1.2 The Alternative Authority of the Elders

According to the Local Government Act (Government 2009), the representation of traditional authority is to be channelled through the chiefs at the respective levels, with the *boma* level as the main domain for traditional authority. This implies that the chiefs are the dominant authority and in the strongest position at the *boma* level. Most of the informants said that the

chief was to be elected by the community, either through a raising of hands or by people standing behind their preferred candidate. When inquiring further, I more often than not found that the chieftainship was in the family of the elected chief, and as such was hereditary. Some of the informants stated that they had inherited their position.

When inquiring about the purpose of the election when the chieftainship was hereditary, I was informed that there sometimes were more than one candidate in the family, and that it was common to choose the one best suited and not necessarily the oldest. As such, the elections served a function in choosing the one best suited in the family. This perspective also offers an explanation as to why several of the informants were reluctant to see any correspondence between their fathers, grandfathers and great grandfathers being the chief and themselves winning the election. It is difficult to say exactly why most of the chiefs were reluctant to acknowledge that their position was inherited, but one possibility is that they did not see the position as hereditary as they had won an election. However, we may also consider the possibility of them adjusting their answers to accommodate what they assumed that I, as a Western researcher, wanted to hear.

Some informants commented on the matter of seemingly hereditary chieftaincies and the consequences for democracy. One of them said that many people now are thinking that electing chiefs would be better since it could prevent unsuited or incompetent people inheriting the positions. He further believed that the chiefs see this as a threat, fearing that they will lose if people with higher education compete (Lubari Ramba Lokolo 2015). As discussed in the theoretical framework, the integration of these “traditional” authorities into the system created in the wake of the CPA, should be seen in relation to Barnett and Zürcher's (2009, 24–30) claim that peacebuilding operations sometimes contribute to re-enforcing patrimonial structures. As the majority of the elections appear to be sham elections rather than actual open elections for these posts, it may be seen as an example of a transfer of ceremonies and symbols of the liberal state.

Many of the chiefs were reported to come from families who owned the chieftainship, and even referred to it as something like a kingdom. However, in accordance with the observations of Leonardi (2007; 2013) in this region, I found that the chieftainships were not necessarily as traditional as is often claimed. Most of the chiefs I interviewed could only trace the chieftainship in their family back to when the the Anglo-Egyptian Condominium colonial power appointed a grandfather or great grandfather of theirs as chief. A few of the chiefs had

been appointed by the SPLA, but still assumed that their sons would inherit the chieftainship. These “SPLA-chiefs” appeared to be less controversial than the ones tracing their authority back to the time of the British rule. This difference should be seen in relation to Leonardi’s (2013, 180–182) findings showing that chieftainship was a “definer and signifier of community” in the prelude to South Sudan’s independence. She writes that tradition and custom had become a useful rhetoric that simultaneously broke down and re-enforced local identities in the aftermath of a war.

In an attempt to understand not only why there were so few open and free elections, but also why the informants wanted to give the impression that there were elections, I asked one of my contacts about this in an informal conversation. He explained that the chosen heir in the family that holds the chieftainship is groomed throughout his childhood and adolescence to take over the position of chief. Moreover, it is not obvious that it is the oldest who is chosen, but any in the line they perceive to be best suited for the task. This perspective brings about the question of whether the ideal of elections, as stipulated in the Local Government Act (Government 2009), is in reality an ideal imported to placate the international community. My findings give different answers to this question; some of my informants have indicated that there is a wish for more democratic elections, while others have expressed satisfaction with the current practice. As such, the desire to democratise the traditional authorities through open elections does not appear to be a South Sudanese idea, but not entirely foreign either. This ambiguity should be seen in relation to the fact that a great deal of the population in the area spent several years abroad during the war, both in neighbouring countries and farther away. As a result, they may have brought different ideas of governance back with them. This ambiguity is not necessarily a question of whether the community seeks democratic control, but rather a question of how they want to organise themselves.

While the *boma* chiefs appear to have less power than stipulated in the Local Government Act, I found that so-called elders still hold considerable power in the communities. Their role is not clarified in the Local Government Act, and as such is not regulated by law. In a meeting concerning the current political situation in South Sudan at Juba University Dr. Alfred Sebit Lokuji (2015) explained that the authority of the elders was weakened in some areas due to a military culture emerging and destroying the local structures. This view is further supported by Bennett et al. (2010) in their report of threats to stability in South Sudan. This is in contrast to my findings discussed above, where I found that this was in fact not happening in Yei.

There, the elders appeared to have kept their position to some extent, even if they are not a part of the system of local governance. However, it is worth noting that their report covered the entire South Sudan, while my thesis focuses mainly on the Yei River County. The reason for this discrepancy may be found in the fact that the area I studied has not seen heavy fighting for many years and less widespread weapon use in general. Several of the people I talked to told me that there were fewer weapons in this area than in other parts of the country.

Many of the informants I talked to emphasised the role played by elders and so-called *monyemenus*³ in conflict resolution and in the community in general. A *monyemenu* was translated to me as a landlord, a custodian of the land on behalf of the community. The position of *monyemenu* is inherited from father to son, and is linked to the control over a specific piece of land. The *Monyomiji* age systems are identified in the Equatoria region of South Sudan, as a system of generational governance where power in the community is transferred from one generation to the next as a circulation of elites. This system is often found in combination with various other forms of traditional authority, such as rain makers. *Monyomiji* may also be used as a term for an age-group of elders (Simonse 1998, 51–65). I interpreted the position of the *monyemenus* described in my interviews as similar to the one of elders, as advisors. Further, I found no evidence that there is a transfer of power in this region as is practiced further east. As a result, I have treated the information regarding *monyemenus* in Yei as part of the system of elders as advisors.

In the villages, one of my informants described the role of the elders sometimes serving as the first point of contact for the community when they are facing a problem and the problem is then transferred to the headmen if they are not able to handle it (Justin Muhamed Murusaleh 2015). Disputes over land are some of the most common issues in the communities, and are often related to borders between properties or the use of land. One of the head chiefs explained that “we need elders to explain who’s land this is” (Joseph Brown Lo-Mose 2015). The elders have an important function in settling these matters, not only on the grass root level but also as advisors for the chiefs. One of the *boma* chiefs explained the relationship between the chiefs and the elders like this: “Sometimes we have conflicts, land

³ Monyemenu is the spelling I was provided with by my interpreter, but the term is used throughout the region with different spelling.

disputes within the community. If [we have these] in an area, the chiefs may go and call the parties and the elders will say what is right” (Abui Hilary Gabriel 2015).

The elders are highly esteemed and one head chief went as far as to say “traditionally, if we don’t respect the elders and have a linear relationship, we cannot get blessing from the Gods” (Justin Towongo James 2015). The significance placed on the elders may be further illustrated by an event that took place during my stay in Yei. A chairman of the elders in Yei Municipality was found dead in the river after having been missing for some time. This led to most officials in the town being unavailable and numerous meetings being cancelled, and I was informed that they had all gone to “the funeral place”. Later, the head chief Peter Sayed Murusaleh (2015) explained that “all the big men are going to the funeral, government officials, chiefs and elders”. The way all the officials and other big men dropped everything when they got word that the elder was dead may indicate that the linkages between the people in power positions are tight. This seems to correspond with Leonardi’s (2013, 147–164) findings that the elders, spiritual leaders and chiefs together formed a local political elite. As these authorities were chosen to represent the community in the handling of disputes with neighbouring communities or the local authorities, they formed a political community. My finding that, despite the recent conflicts in the municipality, the “big men” were all gathering around the funeral of the elder that passed away may imply that such a community still exists.

The role played by the elders serves as an example of the close link between the new formal system and the old informal system. Before the appointment of chiefs, the system was founded on elders. Even as the elders have limited formal power in the system of local governance, they hold an important position as advisors and leaders in the community, giving them informal power. It may seem as if the advisory position of these elders is a way of circumventing the system of local governance placing the traditionally powerful elders back in a position of power. This may be seen as a reinstatement of the old system, as described by Leonardi (2013, 29). Before the system of chiefs was created, elders who acted as rainmakers or other leaders in the community was the one to whom foreigners were directed to when requesting to meet “the chief”.

In the same way as the opposition to the establishment of the municipality and the confusion regarding the paramount chief, the strong position of the elders may also be seen as a sign of the state’s inability to reach the lower levels. One of my informants explained that before the system of chieftaincies was brought, clan elders was the local authority (Manoah Aligo 2015).

This claim is supported by Leonardi's (2013, 9–11) description of people claiming seniority in local political structures undermining the power of the chiefs. As such, the system of elders and other forms of traditional authority predates the chiefs and should be seen in relation to old elites holding on to power despite reform. This may be seen as relating to the claim by Barnett and Zürcher (2009, 24) that foreign NGOs and the UN only transfer the ceremonies and symbols of the democratic state when they are attempting to build peace, without contributing to any substantial change. The formal model of local governance has changed, but the practices on the ground appear to have remained largely the same.

4.2 When the State is not the Service Provider

According to Barnett and Zürcher (2009), a major function of peacebuilding is to enable the state to provide its population with services and security. The infrastructure and provision of services in South Sudan is underdeveloped after years of civil war. In most of the interviews, as well as in a great deal of informal conversations, the weak infrastructure and scarcity of services provided by the state were repeated subjects. The standard of roads became the subject of much small talk when we travelled long or even short distances by car, an experience similar to riding a rollercoaster.

The need for better infrastructure and services was the first issue raised whenever I inquired about the challenges faced by the communities. Many of the informants living in the remote areas of the County complained that they would need to travel a long distance to get to a hospital, and that the schools were inadequate. One *boma* chief told me that if it was raining the children would have to be sent home from school because their classroom was the shade of a mango tree (Abui Hilary Gabriel 2015). Others again told stories of women not reaching the hospital in time when in labour because there were no vehicles in the area.

The issue of people's lives being affected by the lack of infrastructure is not just a tale of human suffering; it is also a tell-tale sign of a state not functioning. Many of the informants, especially in the rural areas, had little faith in the state being able to do much to help them with their problems. The head chief of Otogo Justin Towongo James (2015) explained that he, together with the *payam* director, would take their problems to the county commissioner, not because he could do anything, but because he could draw the attention of an NGO to the matter. As discussed in the theoretical framework, this may serve as a de-legitimation of the

state apparatus. When the state is not the service provider the population has few incentives to pay taxes, and the state is less accountable to the citizens. This also contributes to tax collection becoming even more challenging for *boma* chiefs in the more remote areas, as their population see even less of the services that the state is supposed to provide. One of my informants, Simon Logoro Abui Lupe (2015), suggested that people were reluctant to pay taxes since they were not used to staying in one place long enough to pay taxes during the civil wars, and that it was lack of information and pressure from the top that was the reason for the still not paying. This explanation is supported by Tvedt's (1994, 72–88) account of the failure of the state to establish economic ties with the community it was supposed to serve after the Addis Ababa agreement of 1972 and the years that followed.

4.3 Security and Justice, or Insecurity and Injustice?

In chapter 2, the provision of security for the population is identified as a primary objective of peace- and statebuilding operations. As such, the state's ability to provide security for its population is a good indicator as to the state of the state. In the provision of security lies a functioning justice system and the ability of the state to protect its citizens against violence. This section is divided into one subsection on general security concerns and one on the justice system, so that physical threats to the security of the population is dealt with separately from the issues of the population's trust in the justice system.

4.3.1 Security issues

"We are afraid that they [the LRA] will be a problem, because maybe no one will come and rescue us."

The quote above is from a youth, David Lomoro (2015), interviewed in Tukuri *boma* a remote *boma* in Lasu *payam* near the border of the Democratic Republic of Congo. Tukuri *boma* is one of the most remote *bomas* in the county, closer to the Congolese border than their own *payam* centre. In the past they have suffered attacks from the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA), a rebel movement originating from Uganda and known for their violent operations in the region (Schomerus 2007). They also feel vulnerable to the militias based in the large forests on the opposite side of the border. The *boma* chief of Mundo *boma*, a remote *boma* in Tore *payam*, said that they had experienced many of the same challenges, but that the building of

army barracks in their area had helped (Paul Ondongo Manyi 2015). In Tukuri, on the other hand the reports to the county have not resulted in any additional security forces, leading to the people expressing a sense of being neglected because they are far from the centre (David Lomoro 2015). As such, the case of the security situation in Tukuri serves as a clear example of the state failing to provide security for its citizens.

Bennett et al. (2010) pointed to the threat of LRA in both of their evaluations of 2005 and 2009, and even as the attacks have ceased over the last years, the memory of the threat still has an effect on the people in the region. This was particularly prominent in the most remote *bomas*, which may be seen in relation to the conflicted relationship between the centre and the periphery. These findings indicate that the South Sudanese state despite less acts of violence is still failing in the important task of providing security for its citizens. Even though the security situation in Yei River County is better than in other areas of the country, these observations of the state failing to provide security for its citizens are causes for worry.

4.3.2 Distrust in the Justice System

The importance of custom and tradition as a source of law was emphasised in the development of a South Sudanese justice system after the signing of the CPA in 2005. In 2010, Leonardi et al. (2010, 10–12) found that chiefs and their courts was the only source of justice across South Sudan. This, however, brought with it its own challenges as these chief's courts do not hold a formal position in the justice system. The government authorities have struggled to find the position for this element of the judiciary, which has created added confusion. With the state's limited capacity, questions have been raised regarding its ability to provide the population with justice. In several of the interviews, the informants communicated a lack of trust in the justice system. The distrust covered everything from chiefs choosing to make arrests themselves to allegations of criminals being released because they have powerful relatives or were connected to the ruling elite. The head chief of Yei even said that "If the person [who commits the crime] is a soldier you have no justice" (Peter Sayed Murusaleh 2015), expressing little faith in an independent justice system. This corresponds with similar findings by Bennett et al. (2010, 98), showing that little progress has been made since the signing of the CPA.

One informant claimed that the arrests of several chiefs in the area⁴ were a result of their objecting to the creation of the municipality and that the municipality was conveniently declared during their incarceration (Manoah Aligo 2015). I was not able to find any undisputed evidence for his claim that these chiefs were arrested simply because they had objected to this reform, but it was confirmed by several informal conversations later on. Since this apparently was a relatively widely shared perception, I see this in relation to Caplan's (2005, 46) emphasis of an independent judiciary system and Call and Cousens' (2008, 9–10) argument that failure in the justice system may contribute to renewed conflict. A prevalent perspective of the justice system was that it did not operate independently, but rather as a tool for muzzling opposition, is a threat to the government authorities' legitimacy.

In 2009, Bennett et al. (2010, 97–100) found that the investigation of efforts to establish rule of law and an efficient judiciary had been largely focused on the centre Juba. The levels below the national level had received little attention, and as such, the justice system was underdeveloped on the eve of independence. Throughout my fieldwork, I heard many stories of a failing justice system, leaving me with an impression that not much progress has been made in this field. When someone experienced a crime or in some other way heard news of a crime, the idea that the perpetrator would receive punishment administered by the justice system was ridiculed. This indicates very low levels of trust in the justice system,

Bennett et al. (2010, 98) estimated that more than eighty percent of the population in 2009 had access to justice only through customary law, despite the focus on strengthening formal institutions. As discussed in the theoretical framework, the establishment of an independent judiciary is an important part of statebuilding. Both the findings of Bennett et al. (2010) and my own indicate that such an independent judiciary has not been established, or at the very least that the population do not view the justice system as independent. This realisation places this case well within the framework of Caplan (2005, 45) and Barnett and Zürcher (2009, 29) on judiciary in war-torn societies as discussed in the theoretical framework, and as such serves as an indicator of the non-functioning state.

Despite their low levels of trust in the justice system, most of my informants still upheld the view that they as Equatorians would not resort to violence. This rhetoric may be seen to

⁴ See <http://www.gurtong.net/ECM/Editorial/tabid/124/ctl/ArticleView/mid/519/articleId/10764/Six-Chiefs-Arrested-In-Yei-County.aspx>

contrast the point made by Caplan (2005, 45) that crime prevails when the justice system fails, since the criminal acts in this case apparently do not seem to generate circles of revenge. However, even if the criminal acts do not appear to lead to revenge acts of violence, several informants referred to “other ways” of revenge. These “other ways” would entail contacting someone with supernatural powers, and ask them to make the object ill or even kill them through cursing or poison. Leonardi (2013, 119) also observed the narrative that cursing and poison were means of revenge. As Leonardi’s (2013) observations indicate, the use of witchcraft is not a new concept in the area. However, this continued inclination to turn to witchcraft as a replacement for justice through the justice system may be interpreted as a symptom of the same lack of confidence in the state’s ability to provide security and justice.

4.4 Displacement and Return- a Source of Conflict

When groups of people are displaced this may cause conflict as they are forced onto the territory of other groups. This causes heightened pressure on already meager resources and increased conflict over land. The return of refugees and internally displaced people may also have the same effect, especially when this happens after an extended period. Both these issues are central factors in creating increased instability in Yei River County.

4.4.1 Returning to Host Displaced People

As covered in the introduction, the wars, and particularly the second civil war, caused large numbers of South Sudanese to leave their homes seeking refuge. Especially in the urban areas civilians left the towns for “the bush” or neighbouring countries. After the “liberation” of Yei, many of the informants said that people not originally from Yei settled in the area. Upon the return of people originally from Yei the conflict between settlers and returnees became an issue in the community. One of my informants, an employee of Norwegian People’s Aid and not originally from Yei, told me that when Yei was “liberated” the people who were originally from the area were not there. They had either joined the SPLA or had run away from the fighting. After the area had become peaceful, the people from Yei returned, only to find someone else living in their home. The people who had settled were both soldiers from the SPLA and their families, as well as people displaced from other areas. This narrative is similar to the accounts presented by Bennett et al. (2010, 88) of displaced ethnic groups from other areas refusing to leave the Equatoria region, occupying territories. This created a

conflict between the returnees and the settlers, a conflict that according to my findings is still present today.

As explained in the introduction, the establishment of Yei as the SPLM/A headquarter lead to an influx of people to the town, including a considerable military presence. After Yei became relatively peaceful following the 1997 “liberation” it became a safe haven for people displaced by the war raging in the rest of the South Sudan (Martin and Sluga 2011, 4–5). Moreover, the crisis that hit the country in December 2013 and the violent conflict that is still going on sent hordes of people fleeing the affected areas. Many of the internally displaced people are finding their way to the Yei area, and are settling with relatives who have been there since the last war. The return of the autochthonous Kakwa population added pressure on the Dinka, both IDPs and military personnel, that had immigrated (Martin and Sluga 2011, 5).

The issue of returnees was identified by Bennett et.al. (2010) in their report on factors causing instability both right after the signing of the CPA and in 2009. They even found that the threat of return destabilising communities was greater in 2009 than in 2005. My findings suggest that six years later this is still a threat to the stability in the area. However, it presents itself in different ways across the county, with some areas more greatly affected than others. Based on my interviews it also appears that there is a significant difference in the impact on the community, depending on whether it is in a rural or urban area.

Crowding the Town- the Migrant Population in Urban Areas

In Yei town many of my informants pointed to the increased pressure on institutions such as schools. One of the informants was telling the story of how it was a race to arrive at the school in time to get a place for his children, and was blaming this shortage on too many children of migrant families taking up the places (Salah Edward 2015). In 2010, Martin and Sluga (2011, 20) found that the access to schools was a motivational factor in people choosing to remain in Yei rather than return to their home area. One of my informants brought up this topic/issue saying that people in other areas of the country sent their children to relatives in Yei because of the schools (Salah Edward 2015). As I did not interview any IDPs about this or had access to school records, I have no way of knowing if this is a common practice or simply an expression of frustration. However, it is worth considering that if it is the case that people are sending their children to the area this might also be connected to the security situation in other parts of the country. In a consultancy report commissioned by the World

Food Programme, Bailey and Harragin (2009, 15) found that refugees and internally displaced people delayed their return because of access to educational opportunities, as well as the security situation. With the worsening of the security situation in parts of South Sudan that we have witnessed over the last years, it is likely that this is an even stronger factor now than six years ago.

Cattle and Conflict- Migration in the Rural Areas

In the rural areas, the conflict between the host communities and the migrants and displaced people has varied greatly between the *payams*, and even between the *bomas* within the *payams*. In the areas bordering Western Equatoria pastoralists moving their cattle have caused major problems for the farmers. The pastoralists are forced to move because of drought and the violent conflict in their home areas. The conflict with the host communities is twofold; it is partly because of the cattle ruining the crops of the farmers and partly due to the cattle keepers being perceived as a threat to the communities. According to Bennett et al. (2010) this was not an pressing issue in 2005, but became a more serious threat around 2009, and according to my findings it appears to have become worse after the recent crisis. This contributes to an increased level of conflict in the communities.

Many of the informants from Tore *payam* particularly complained about the pastoralists bringing their cattle, and the consequences this would have on the crops. A prominent resident of Tore *payam* described the problem as the cattle destroying the crops, leaving some families without food. He continued to explain that they had attempted to contact the cattle keepers to have them pay compensation, but they had refused. The point about the pastoralists refusing to pay compensation for the losses suffered by the farmers in the host community brings the other element of the conflict. Many of the informants in the areas affected by the pastoralists' arrival described a sense of fear connected with the situation. As the cattle keepers are armed many perceive them as being more likely to use violence if confronted. A prominent member of the community in Tore *payam* also said that their presence contributed to the people in the community fearing that the current civil war might spread. The seeming inability of the state and the local authorities in handling these conflicts may serve to increase the incentive to use violence because there does not seem to exist a credible arena for conflict-resolution (Call and Cousens 2008, 9–10).

Both in the urban and rural areas of the county the considerable presence of migrants is affecting the society. In the aftermath of outbreak of the crisis there were reports of Dinka murdering Nuer in Yei, the killings took place in the night and were only discovered when the bodies were recovered the following day. Some complained that the perpetrators were not arrested, and a representative of an international NGO said that they claim the reason for this is that they are part of the “ruling group”. Bennett et al. (2010, 88) also reported complaints from the local communities that government or SPLA representatives protected people who took part in unlawful land grabbing and other crimes. These events are fuelling the tension in the area, and together with the heavy us-them rhetoric, it is contributing to a split between this region and the national level.

4.5 We are not Like Them, the Rhetoric of Difference

In 2009 Bennett et al. (2010, 43) identified a hardening of ethnic identities as one of the key challenges that needed to be faced in order to avoid escalation of conflict. During my fieldwork I observed ethnic tension, both in regards to the migrant population settled in Yei and the pastoralists who were displaced to the region and in regards to the rest of the population in the country. As mentioned above (pp. 13-14), Paris and Sisk (2009a) makes a clear distinction between the concepts of statebuilding and nationbuilding, stating that nationbuilding deals with the collective identity of the nation’s population. However, the challenges concerning a lack of collective identity still needs to be discussed, as it is affecting the level of trust the population has in the government because it is seen to be dominated by some ethnic groups.

The migrant communities in Yei appear to be secluded from the host community in many aspects of life. One informant explained that most of these communities, both the South Sudanese from other areas of the country and the foreigners, have their own areas and own congregations (Raphael Sabun 2015). Walking around Yei Town, I could observe that people from the external communities, both from other countries and other parts of South Sudan, often stuck together.

The conflict between the displaced people settled in Yei and the host community have taken on an ethnic dimension, and a discourse of being different from the other people of South Sudan dominated. A great deal of the people I interviewed made clear statements that they

view the autochthonous population of Yei River County, as different and better than many of the other ethnic groups or tribes in the country. Especially the Kakwa – an ethnic group native to the border areas between DR Congo, Uganda and South Sudan, including the greater Yei area – voiced this perspective. The section above on trust in the justice system touched upon the narrative that the people I talked to viewed it as a trait of their ethnic group to refrain from the use of violence, but it is also important for this section. Following the description of themselves as non-violent was the description of other groups as violent, and a rhetoric of difference. Many of the informants distanced themselves from the current civil war, stating that it is not their conflict. During one of my interviews, a group of young men came over to greet the informant, after which he informed me that they were deserted soldiers stating that “These soldiers left the army because the war has become a tribal war, so they left” (Manoah Aligo 2015). In informal conversations I had, the crisis often became a subject, and people expressed great frustration over the leadership of the country and the lack of real representation of the Equatoria region. People often referred to it as being between the two leaders, Salva Kiir and Riek Machar and their personal conflict.

In the continuation of the perception of the crisis as being someone else’s doing, and not something they identified with was the notion of the people of this region being different from the others. When discussing the crisis most of the respondents were clear that most of the consequences they were suffering from the crisis was related to the internally displaced persons staying in their community, and not their own part in the crisis. Especially the before mentioned challenges with the cattle keepers came up in these conversations. They were described as being different from the people originating from the area, and many communicated a perception of *them* being unreliable and unwilling to adjust to the community. This corresponds with the findings of Martin and Sluga (2011, 11) of the willingness to blame the increase in crime on the Dinka population.

The Dinka is an agro-pastoralist people consisting of several sub-groups. They have traditionally been found on different sides both politically and militarily. The current president, Salva Kiir Myardit is Dinka (Johnson 2014, 300). In the 1983 census the Dinka accounted for approximately one third of the population of the South (Johnson 2003, 51–53). Marginalised elites portray the Dinka as being in a privileged position in the state apparatus, and claim that strengthening this apparatus may be perceived as strengthening the position of

the Dinka. This is of particular importance for this thesis as the Dinka, originate from a different region than Equatoria, but are still present with a considerable number in Yei.

This rhetoric of difference was also noticeable in the street scene in Yei town and in informal conversations. In 2010, Martin and Sluga (2011, 11) observed that there were heavy ethnic tensions, and even open harassment of Dinka and refugees from DR Congo. I did not observe any open harassment as such, but on numerous occasions, I witnessed acts by Kakwa aimed at distancing themselves from Dinka. One such example was when I spent an afternoon in a hair salon and I noticed that the Kakwa women switched to speaking Kakwa when some Dinka women entered. The woman I went there with turned to me and whispered, “you see those women, they are Dinka” as an explanation as to why it would be best to avoid them. The wish to alienate the others, as well as assigning them with certain traits based on their ethnicity was common. This is relevant to the question of the state as the narrative of the state being closely linked to the Dinka, as discussed in the theoretical framework, also links the negative view of the Dinka to a negative view of the state.

4.6 Summary

The findings discussed in this chapter indicates that Yei River County is not a success-story of statebuilding, rather the opposite. In the first section I presented the system of local governance according to the Local Government Act of 2009 (Government 2009). My findings show a heavy discontent with the creation of the municipality in Yei town. This indicated that both the process of establishing it, as well as the ability of the state to implement reform is limited. Part of the resistance to reform came from chiefs in the area, and when I continued to examine the role of traditional authority, I found that confusion around roles prevailed in many areas. The *boma* chiefs, who are supposed to be the main authority at the *boma* level, instead found themselves in a squeeze between the authorities above and the community below. Their position is further pressured because of the expectation that they would generate their own income through taxes and fines, while feeling responsible for their community. While the *boma* chiefs had less power than stipulated by the Local Government Act, I found that the elders constituted a strong authority that was not recognised in the act. This also supports the indication that the state has limited ability to implement reform.

Further, I found that the state failed in providing security for its citizens, particularly in the peripheral areas. Together with the lapse in the justice system that created a perception of prevailing injustice, this impairs people's trust in the judiciary and the state. I did however not find that people were inclined to take matters into their own hands through violent revenge, with the exception of minor fights. This disposition may be seen as playing a part in the relative stability of the region in spite of the issues covered.

The high numbers of displaced people based in Yei appear to be a significant source of frustration for the local population. In the urban areas of Yei town this conflict was linked to the struggle for resources and services such as schools, but also took on an ethnic dimension. In the rural areas, the displaced pastoralists and their cattle created problems for their host communities. The conflict between the displaced people settled in Yei and the host community have taken on an ethnic dimension and a discourse of being different from the other people of South Sudan dominated. This was also present in the narrative about the national leadership of the country, illustrating their identity as peripheral to the centre in the capital. The consequences of these findings will be discussed further below.

5 Conclusion

Despite being better suited for it than most other areas in the country, the implementation of statebuilding in Yei River County appears not to have been successful. My findings presented in this thesis indicate that not much progress has been made since the Comprehensive Peace Agreement in 2005, or indeed the independence in 2011. However, as this is a single case study it is not possible to conclude that the implementation of statebuilding in all the peripheries in South Sudan has failed based only on the findings in my study. However, as this is a crucial case study, as discussed in chapter 3, it may provide us with valuable insight despite being a single case study. In the following, I will discuss the consequences of my findings and recommend further research activities based on them.

5.1 The Significance of the Findings

There appears to be a lack of knowledge about the system of local governance among both the stakeholders and the community, and with legal texts not having been translated to local languages this makes this situation all the more challenging. This should be seen in relation to the centralisation of power, where power is moved from the lower levels of local governance to the higher levels. Together these elements limit the ability of the non-elite stakeholders in the peripheral areas to voice their opinions. Having a negative effect on local ownership, the need for local knowledge is apparent, as discussed by Autesserre (2014). My findings further indicated that the *bomas* experienced different challenges in different areas of the county, which supports the call for local knowledge. Even in cases where the *bomas* were quite close geographically the variations were noteworthy. This supports Scott's (1998) argument against universalisation, the different challenges may need different measures to be taken.

Following the discussion of local ownership, my findings indicate that the state is failing to establish economic ties with the community, this in congruence with what Tvedt (1994) found in the wake of the Addis Ababa agreement. The lack of service provision in the peripheries makes it difficult for the *boma* chiefs to collect taxes since the community experiences no reciprocity following their contribution. This seemingly fragile relationship between the state and the community places this case within the framework of Moore describing how this weakens accountability, an important feature of a functioning state.

Several of my informants expressed that the apparent failure of statebuilding at the local level had a negative impact on their trust in the state at the central level. This indicates that there is a connection between the failure to implement statebuilding at the local and at the central level. Even though such a conclusion is dependent on further research, it serves as an indication that the peripheries require more attention, both by researchers and stakeholders involved in statebuilding efforts. When this attention does not seem to be given it may be a result of several factors. As discussed in the theoretical framework, peacebuilding and statebuilding operations are often expected to be concluded within a limited time-frame. This places restrictions on the ability to reach the periphery in areas with limited infrastructure, making it difficult to pay sufficient attention to the periphery. In addition, I experienced that the language barrier complicated contact with the most remote communities, thus slowing down the process even further.

5.2 Other Factors

Corroborating existing literature, the findings of this thesis indicate that statebuilding operations in the periphery are facing serious challenges, which may lead to renewed conflict. However, my finding that people in Yei River District appeared reluctant to turn to violent conflict contests the theoretical framework on the connection between failure in statebuilding and renewed conflict. Despite this communicated reluctance to violence, I also found several informants indicating that the non-violent line would not last indefinitely if they did not see improvements. Consequently, we should not treat the current state of relative peace in Yei River County as a permanent state.

The apparent tendency to adapt the system of local governance to fill the gap where the state was failing may have contributed to counter the consequences of the failure to implement statebuilding. As an example, we may view the strong position of elders in Yei River District as limiting factor to the risk of youths turning to violence. This contradicts the finding by Bennett et al. (2010) that the weakened position of elders contributed to more violence by youths as I found that this position was not significantly weakened. It is also possible that some of the factors that provided Yei River County with a good basis for statebuilding also contributed to reducing the potential for violent conflict when the implementation of statebuilding failed.

I will therefore argue that we need more information in order to make a clear conclusion in the matter of the relationship between failed statebuilding and conflict, a matter that will be discussed further in the continuation.

5.3 Further Research

We need better insight into perspectives of the communities in Yei River County in order to understand better why statebuilding seems to have failed when the conditions appeared favourable. I have not performed an in-depth analysis of the efforts made to implement statebuilding, only the level of success. Assessment of projects aimed at implementing statebuilding and building capacity among stakeholders in local governance and the communities would be useful. The findings in this study indicate that the capacity among the stakeholders and communities to implement statebuilding is inadequate, and it would therefore be useful to know more about the efforts made in capacity building. It would also be of value to identify participants in workshops and other capacity-building projects and compare their perspectives to the ones of stakeholders who had not attended such arenas. My study focused on the local elites as stakeholders in the system of local governance, and even though efforts were made to access the perspectives of community members, the information gathered was limited. A study that focuses more on the perspective of people with lower status would also contribute to an understanding of why the failure of the implementation of statebuilding in the area has not led to violent conflict. Such an assessment would contribute to shedding light on whether the reason for this apparent failure is a lack of priority to the peripheries, as indicated by the contributions of Kappler (2013 and Autesserre (2014) in the theoretical framework.

A case study of other peripheries of South Sudan would be useful to get an overall insight into the implementation of statebuilding in the peripheries. As a qualitative case study, this study has a weakness in terms of generalisation, but as a crucial case, it has provided insight into the implementation of statebuilding in a favourable case. To complement the findings of this study and help identify features that may be generalised, I recommend a case study of one of the areas currently suffering civil war, e.g. Jonglei, Upper Nile or Unity state. That would constitute a crucial case study at the other end of the spectrum from mine and could provide a useful contrast as the areas have less favourable conditions and a different outcome than this case.

Similar to my study, a case study of any of the three areas should include an assessment of peacebuilding and statebuilding efforts, as well as data collected from members of the communities. Comparing the findings from my study with such a case study would contribute to a foundation for generalisation. By comparing two cases in that way makes it easier to identify the differences and similarities leading up to the different outcome, and as such giving better grounds for generalisation.

5.4 The Bumpy Road Ahead

As this thesis shows, much remains to be learned about the undoubtedly challenging task of building a South Sudanese state. However, it also indicates that the successful building of the state requires a substantial focus on the lower levels of governance. The South Sudanese state is today a peripheral state, even when considering the better positioned of the peripheries. With South Sudan facing its third civil war and a devastating economic crisis, the failure to implement statebuilding in the peripheries may prove the last straw, making the dream of a peaceful South Sudan just that, a dream.

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Appendix List of Interviews

Name	Position	Date of interview	Place of interview
Abraham Agok Chan	NGO employee living in Yei for ten years	21.01.2015	Yei town
Abui Hillary Gabriel	Boma chief Ombasi	12.02.2015	Ombasi boma
Allison Aligo	Office clerk Mugwo payam office	05.02.2015	Mugwo payam
Anthony Amede	Head chief Tore	04.02.2015	Tore payam
Anthony Diko	Monyemenu	29.01.2015	Yei town
Augustine Lubari Beljemi	Payam director Mugwo	05.02.2015	Mugwo payam
Azariah Khamis Noah	Payam director Tore	04.02.2015	Tore payam
Bakata Charles	Community member with overview of the political situation	10.02.2015	Yei town
Confucius Guya Sartiek	Elder	12.02.2015	Mungo boma
David Bala	Director at Yei Crop Training Centre	29.01.2015	Yei town
David Lomoro	Youth in the community	13.02.2015	Tukuri boma
David Roger Michael	Deputy payam director Otego	12.02.2015	Otego payam
Dr. Alfred Sebit Lokuji	Academic specialised in good governance and development in East Africa	12.01.2015	Juba University
Felix Lumori John	Chairman committee of development Lasu payam	06.02.2015	Lasu payam
Fraser Joseph Lokule	NGO employee from Yei	21.01.2015	Yei town
Group interview: Steven Wongo, Ajume Alex, Isac Bida and Isac Taban	Group of youth leaders in Lasu payam	06.02.2015	Lasu payam
Group interview: Michael Khamis Majeipi, Roze Franco Twasa and Angelina Potuma	Senior head man, community member and community member	13.02.2015	Mapoko boma

Group of women *	Group of women in the community	05.02.2015	Mugwo payam
Jane Tumaka Saima	Chair lady of Asole boma	06.02.2015	Asole boma
John Ponsiano Loro	Block director Yei municipality	22.01.2015	Yei town
John Thomas	Boma chief Asole	06.02.2015	Asole boma
John Yuma Jacob	Head man	21.01.2015	Yei town
Joseph Brown Lo-Mose	Head chief Mugwo	05.02.2015	Mugwo payam
Joseph Lugala Esayah	Elder	05.02.2015	Logamera boma
Joseph Mandi	Elder	05.02.2015	Logamera boma
Justin Modi Matiya	Head chief Lasu	06.02.2015	Lasu payam
Justin Muhamed Murusaleh	Boma chief Rasual	04.02.2015	Tore payam
Justin Towongo James	Head chief Ootogo	12.02.2015	Ootogo payam
Kristi Mudi Ambros	Women representative in Mugwo Payam Court	05.02.2015	Mugwo payam
Lubari Ramba Lokolo	Community member with overview of the political situation	06.02.2015	Yei town
Maliamunku Bosco Robert	Secretary General Yei Municipality Chamber of Commerce	21.01.2015	Yei town
Manoah Aligo	Academic returned to Yei and community member	05.02.2015	Mugwo-Yei road
Marcelina Konga Seja	Chair lady of Lasu payam	06.02.2015	Lasu payam
Paul Ondongo Many	Boma chief Mundu	04.02.2015	Tore payam
Peter Hakim Justin	Academic specialised in traditional authority in Equatoria	15.01.2015	PAX office in Juba
Peter Sayed Murusaleh	Head chief Yei	05.02.2015	Yei town
Raphael Sabun	NGO employee living in Yei	27.01.2015	Yei town
Richard Lugala God	Office manager at the County Commissioner's Office	06.02.2015	Yei town
Salah Edward	NGO employee living in Yei	27.01.2015	Logobero

Samuel Aminga Mangora	Sub chief acting as boma chief Mungo	12.02.2015	Mungo boma
Simon Akasha Abraham	Boma chief Logamera	05.02.2015	Mugwo payam
Simon Logoro Abui Lupe	Boma chief Tukuri	13.02.2015	Tukuri boma

*The interviewees wished to remain anonymous.